

30 August 2021

OraTaiao:NZ Climate and Health Council
Auckland

To: Coordinator
Climate Change Division
Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade
Private Bag 18901
Wellington

Re: Consultation on approach to COP26

Kei te rangatira, tēnā koe,

OraTaiao:NZ Climate and Health Council wishes to provide feedback on Aotearoa's approach to the COP26 international climate change negotiations. An extensive background to our position on Aotearoa's NDC commitments and obligations can be found in our submission earlier this year to the Climate Change Commission on its draft advice to Government, particularly on our pages 12-18, and 82-87¹.

In summary, we recommended an ambitious NDC target - around ten-fold greater than Aotearoa's first NDC submitted back in 2016. This is a "much more" ambitious NDC than the Commission subsequently advised. . Scaling up our NDC ten-fold takes full account of our privileged position as a wealthy nation and a nation that has benefitted from high historical emissions, and one that aligns with our position as important members of the wider Pacific community. Most importantly, Aotearoa's response must have health, wellbeing, equity, justice and indigenous rights at its heart. The ability of the world to limit warming within 1.5 degrees must be substantially strengthened at COP26.

MFAT's background document on Aotearoa's approach to the COP26 negotiations is disappointing - human health and wellbeing are not mentioned once in the entire document. We strongly recommend that our response properly take account of the health risks from climate change, that the national and international health benefits from climate action be appropriately addressed in our approach, and human health and wellbeing be the major principles that guide our negotiations. The COVID pandemic has put the importance of public health to the fore. International recognition of Aotearoa's response to the pandemic puts us in an excellent position to promote a health-centred negotiation framework.

This February, the WHO's former Director General, Dr Margaret Chan stated: "...achieving net zero emissions is the most important global health intervention now and for decades to come." and "Health benefits will outweigh the costs of mitigation policies, even without considering the longer-term health and economic benefits of avoiding more severe climate change."² Similarly, it has been

¹ Available at:

https://d3n8a8pro7vhmx.cloudfront.net/orataiao/pages/635/attachments/original/1616977571/OraTaiao_NZ_Climate_and_Health_Council_submission_to_Climate_Change_Commission_-_27_March_2021.pdf

² Fu-Chun MCF. (Margaret Chan). (2021) Accelerating towards net zero emissions: the most important global health intervention. *The Lancet Planetary Health*. 5(2):e64-e65.

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(20\)30296-5/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30296-5/fulltext)

shown in detailed modelling by Hamilton et al³ that “*a greater consideration of health in the NDCs and climate change mitigation policies has the potential to yield considerable health benefits as well as achieve the “well below 2°C” commitment across a range of regional and economic contexts.*”

We have the following recommendations under each specific heading:

1. Transparency

OraTaiao supports position 1.1 “maintain a robust and efficient transparency framework”, but we are concerned that Aotearoa does not undermine the goal of limiting warming to 1.5 degrees, when the world is already at 1.3 degrees, by changes to ghg metrics through position 1.2. Rapid methane reductions this decade may be essential to the global ability to limit further warming to within 0.2 degrees and avoid tipping points. Aotearoa’s best interests are ultimately stabilising our climate, not short-sighted avoidance of our responsibilities as a relatively wealthy, high-emitting nation blessed with many natural resources.

2. Carbon Markets

OraTaiao supports position 2.1 which urges promotion of environmental integrity through robust accounting, the avoidance of double counting, and strong transparency (reporting and review); and position 2.2 not permitting pre-2020 credits.

3. Climate Finance

OraTaiao supports transparency and predictability in climate finance, and much more climate finance transferring between developed and developing nations. OraTaiao urges our government to dramatically increase our climate finance, as outlined in our submission on the Climate Change Commission’s draft advice. We support Oxfam Aotearoa’s analysis⁴ that Aotearoa’s financing must increase around ten-fold. We would like to see our government committed to championing the interests and voices of developing nations - both in advocacy and in practical access.

4. Loss and Damage

This is very much an issue of global fairness, where those nations that have contributed least to climate changes are experiencing climate change harms first and worst. OraTaiao supports advocating for effective and efficient outcomes that advance the interests of Pacific Island countries. However, we do not agree that these interests or approaches be constrained by consistency with Aotearoa’s national interests.

5. Agriculture

Aotearoa's emissions profile is unique due to the large contribution of agriculture, in particular animal agriculture. To address the emissions of agriculture and improve health outcomes globally, New Zealand needs to go further than supporting the Kornivia Joint Work on Agriculture and must advocate for dietary change to be incorporated into UNFCCC processes and outcomes. Only through widespread adoption of plant-based diets (as detailed in the EAT Lancet Planetary Health Diet

³ Hamilton I., et al (2021) The public health implications of the Paris Agreement: a modelling study. *The Lancet Planetary Health*. 5(2), E74-83. [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196\(20\)30249-7/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanplh/article/PIIS2542-5196(20)30249-7/fulltext)

⁴ Available at: <https://www.oxfam.org.nz/news-media/reports/afair2030targetforaotearoareport/> (Accessed 30/08/2021)

report⁵ as well as improving the efficiency of agriculture production and reducing food waste, can we both significantly reduce agricultural emissions and substantially improve population health.

We must advocate for food systems, including dietary change, to be included in NDCs. Aotearoa will need to address this in our own climate mitigation policies to demonstrate global leadership on tackling agricultural emissions and improving human health. OraTaiao urges differential agricultural treatment - favouring the needs of small subsistence farmers over industrial agricultural operations (including Aotearoa).

6. Gender Action Plan

OraTaiao strongly supports positions 6.1 and 6.2, encouraging the negotiating team to reflect and ensure that all positions taken by Aotearoa are highly consistent with the stance here.

7. Local Communities and Indigenous Peoples Platform

OraTaiao strongly supports positions 7.1, 7.2 and 7.3 - and again, encouraging the negotiating team to reflect and ensure that all positions taken by Aotearoa are highly consistent with the stance here. We would like to see this Platform given a central highly influential position at this Conference of the Parties 2022.

The right to the highest attainable standard of health is recognised in the UN Declaration on Human Rights, and hauora is one of the taonga guaranteed to all citizens under Te Tiriti o Waitangi. Health and wellbeing should be the foundation of MFAT's approach to the international climate change negotiations and our strong desire is that Aotearoa plays a strong role in ensuring that this is a human health-centred, fair COP26 that strengthens the world's ability to limit warming to within 1.5 degrees.

Nāku noa, nā

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "COFFEY".

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⁵ Willett W, Rockström J, Loken B, et al. Food in the Anthropocene: the EAT-Lancet Commission on healthy diets from sustainable food systems. Lancet. 2019;393(10170):447-92. Erratum in: Lancet. 2019;393(10171):530. [https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736\(18\)31788-4.pdf](https://www.thelancet.com/pdfs/journals/lancet/PIIS0140-6736(18)31788-4.pdf)

About OraTaiao

OraTaiao: The New Zealand Climate and Health Council is an organisation calling for urgent, fair, and Tiriti-based climate action in Aotearoa; we recognise the important co-benefits to health, wellbeing and fairness from strong and well-designed mitigative policies. We honour Māori aspirations, are committed to the principles of te Tiriti o Waitangi, and strive to reduce inequities between Māori and other New Zealanders. We are guided in our practice by the concepts of kaitiakitanga (guardianship), kotahitanga (unity), manaakitanga (caring), and whakatipuranga (future generations).

OraTaiao has grown over a decade to more than 700 health professionals concerned with:

- The negative impacts of climate change on health, well-being, and fairness;
- The gains to health, well-being, and fairness that are possible through strong, health-centred climate action;
- Highlighting the impacts of climate change on those who already experience disadvantage or ill-health (i.e., equity impacts);
- Reducing the health sector's contribution to climate change.

As well as individual members, we are backed by 19 of New Zealand's leading health professional organisations for our Health Professionals Joint Call to Action on Climate Change and Health. This support includes the New Zealand Medical Association, the New Zealand Nurses Organisation and the Public Health Association, plus numerous specialist colleges. Together, these organisations represent tens of thousands of our country's health workforce.

As an organisational member of the Board of the Global Climate & Health Alliance, we work with a worldwide movement of health professionals and health organisations focused on the urgent health challenges of climate change - and the health opportunities of climate action. OraTaiao signed the Doha Declaration on Climate, Health and Wellbeing of December 2012, which reflects this international perspective.