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Press Release

For Immediate Release

Alliance of top universities urge G20 leaders to prioritise net zero emissions

November 18, 2020

An international coalition of leading climate research universities will issue its first declaration ahead of the G20 Summit on 21 and 22 November 2020.

The International Universities Climate Alliance member universities span the populated continents, representing one-third of the 100 highest performing climate research universities and a quarter of the top 100 environmental research universities worldwide.

Its Declaration implores world leaders to use the post-COVID recovery to implement measures to counteract climate change, warning that failure to do so will lock in catastrophic consequences for generations to come. Regional media events will be held with a panel of speakers from Asia Pacific and UK university members.

Professor Ian Jacobs, President and Vice-Chancellor of UNSW Sydney in Australia, a founding member of the Alliance, said he and his colleagues recognised the need for experts with diverse voices to speak out about the climate crisis.

‘Many challenges lie ahead of us in combatting the existential crisis in which the world finds itself. The International Universities Climate Alliance is a rich resource upon which governments, business and industry – and for individuals – can rely for evidence led advice.’

Another founding member of IUCA, Professor Xiang Zhang, President and Vice-Chancellor of The University of Hong Kong, said that COVID-19 had shown the need for the world to come together to effectively address global problems and the power of a collaborative crisis response.

‘The climate crisis needs urgent attention and response,’ said Professor Zhang. ‘HKU has carried out intensive research and witnessed impressive progress in ecology and biodiversity, which is closely related to global warming and how it impacts the world. Our research on environmental change can help tackle the pressing problem through collaborative efforts, and the impacts could spread wide and far.’

‘The COVID-19 pandemic has brought many changes in the way people live and their relationship with nature. It has also demonstrated how evidence-based solutions provide the best guidance for the way to solve a global crisis. The world’s recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic should be driven by solutions that mitigate rather than exacerbate climate change. We know what many of these solutions are. We should also make use of this opportunity to



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formulate novel solutions derived from interdisciplinary research to mitigate environmental damage. This is how academics can help contribute to achieve a sustainable environment,' said Professor Matthew Evans, Dean of Science and Professor of Ecology, HKU.

The Climate Alliance is unprecedented in scale and scope and will support world leaders, policy makers and industry in planning for, and responding to, climate change. It draws on the expertise of climate science researchers in several regions across the world, to inform debate and offer solutions at a national and global level.

The advent of the Alliance comes at a time when momentum is building for countries to decarbonise their economies. In recent months there have been moves by various nations to fortify incremental efforts with policies and actions equal to the urgency of the situation.

Such plans include the EU proposing a 'Carbon Border Adjustment Mechanism' to motivate foreign producers and EU importers to reduce their carbon emissions; California announcing plans to ban petrol-powered passenger vehicles from 2035; and China pledging to become carbon neutral by 2060.

The Alliance will provide a central hub for universities to share the latest climate research and enable greater collaboration between leading research teams.

For more information relating to the online launch of The International Universities Climate Alliance, please visit <https://www.universitiesforclimate.org/>.

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