

Media Release

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For immediate release

NZ psychologists join world pledge to help stem climate change

*And commit their associations to apply their science and direct resources to support
UN Sustainable Development Goal*

Auckland, NZ – New Zealand psychologists have joined a global pledge to help stem climate change at a recent world summit held in Portugal.

The New Zealand Psychological Society's (NZPsS) Director of Scientific Issues, Brian Dixon, (who is also Co-Chair of the Society's Climate Psychology Task Force) was among the leaders and representatives of psychological associations from more than 40 nations on five continents who met in Lisbon and pledged to apply psychological science to combating global climate change.

"It was a great honour and responsibility to be invited to participate in this historic summit," said Mr Dixon. "Being the science of behaviour, psychology has much to say about what people can do to respond to the impacts of climate change and to develop strategies to cope. We pledged to encourage leaders in government, academia, health and business to use more psychological knowledge in designing policies to promote sustainable preventive and corrective behaviours."

Participants at the first International Summit on Psychology's Contributions to Global Health issued a [proclamation on collaboration](#), committing the 43 signatories to use their professional, scientific, educational, cultural and applied resources "to achieve progress on matters of utmost importance for which psychology offers the greatest contribution." Their initial efforts will focus on the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal 13: Take action to combat climate change and its impacts.

They also signed a resolution citing the "overwhelming agreement among climate scientists that climate change poses a serious global threat, is occurring faster than previously anticipated and is contributed to by human behaviour."

Mr Dixon reports that Marcelo Rebelo de Sousa, president of Portugal, [addressed the summit](#), praising psychologists for taking on the challenge of global climate change.

"You chose the right subject because it's a global subject," he said. "We must have a global response to it. There is not a single country, not even a superpower, that can address alone this issue."

During the meeting, held earlier this month, participants developed plans for advocacy, media campaigns and research to meet the goals laid out in the proclamation and

resolution. They agreed to continue to work together to put these plans into action in their respective countries.

Participants at the summit heard about the work of the New Zealand Psychological Society's Climate Psychology Task Force over the past five years and of its plans, including increased collaboration with its Australian counterparts.

Mr Dixon said there was particular interest in the bicultural focus of the NZPsS and in the predictions of disproportionate social effects of climate change on our Māori communities and our Pacific neighbours.

"We can expect those living in low-lying island and coastal areas to be seriously affected by sea-level rises, more frequent and severe storm events and reduction in seafood and horticulture in the coastal margins," said Mr Dixon.

"Furthermore, movement of large numbers of people away from such zones (and mostly into our cities) will put extraordinary pressures on our social systems and support services, such as health, welfare, housing, transport and city infrastructure."

Mr Dixon said that to help people cope with those changes and the related impacts, New Zealand needs to focus on relevant training of professionals and increasing the numbers of psychologists, particularly Māori psychologists and those from Pacific nations and communities.

Another area of concern Mr Dixon highlighted is New Zealand's agricultural sector and the resistance of some farmers to reducing carbon emissions as will eventually be required under the Zero Carbon Act.

"Many farmers are doing a great job in reducing their fuel use and changing to more sustainable practices. However, it is clear there is still widespread reluctance to contribute to that effort and the Government and farming leaders should be talking with psychology professionals about how people can be encouraged to change their approaches so they can get the best advantage in marketing and selling their products," said Mr Dixon.

"Few farmers realise the Zero Carbon Act requirement of 5 percent reduction in emissions from 2025 will add just one cent on average to the cost of a kilogram of milk solids. That's insignificant compared to the monthly export price fluctuation and is a cost that consumers will pay anyway. They can manage much more than that and get more public support."

In addition to Aotearoa/New Zealand, other countries represented from five continents at the Lisbon summit included: Australia, Brazil, Sweden, Cuba, Jordan, Mexico, Nigeria, South Korea, Nepal, and Uganda. The summit was co-organised by the American Psychological Association and the Order of Portuguese Psychologists.

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