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US President Joe Biden is hosting a virtual Leaders Summit on Climate on April 22 and 23 and has invited 40 of the world's leaders to attend.

The White House said the summit "will underscore the urgency — and the economic benefits — of stronger climate action."

Persuading the world's economic giants to cut emissions this decade to keep the 1.5-degree-Celsius limit to warming within reach, discussing opportunities to strengthen capacity to protect lives and livelihoods from the impacts of climate change, and addressing the global security challenges posed by climate change are among the summit's key themes.

Curiously, the White House brief made no mention about what we strongly believe to be an equally critical concern: aligning the global responses to climate change and the Covid-19 pandemic.

Climate change and the contagion that has wreaked havoc on economies and health systems are inextricably linked. It is a concept that has gained traction among environmentalists and virologists alike. Some are even convinced that climate change caused the Covid pandemic.

An article in the News Medical website cites a paper published in the Science of the Total Environment journal in January 2021 that presented evidence that climate change may have been directly responsible for spawning the severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2), the virus behind the Covid-19 pandemic.

It said a team of scientists from the United Kingdom, Germany and the United States "were able to link the climatic changes that occur as a result of climate change directly to Covid-19."

Earth's climate is dependent on the delicate interplay of several aspects, including the atmosphere, water cycle, land and ice surfaces, and animal and plant species. Any variation in that interplay can dramatically disrupt the entire system.

The climate has gone through several massive transformations, experiencing cycles of glacial advance and retreat and asteroid impacts. It took eons, but every time, the climate managed to heal itself.

Man came along and altered the equation forever.

The first indication of human activity influencing the climate was the First Industrial Revolution in the 1800s. During that period, coal, railroads and land clearing increased greenhouse gas emissions, a condition that has come to be known as global warming.

No red flags would be raised until 1963, when a meeting of experts on global warming warned that the melting polar icecaps could lead to widespread coastal flooding.

Their warning was largely ignored, and it took another three decades before the next big step in the fight against global warming was made.

In 1997, 155 nations signed the Kyoto Protocol, a treaty that addresses the problem of greenhouse gas or carbon emissions.

It is in the spirit of the Kyoto Protocol that President Biden has called the Leaders Summit on Climate. But to reiterate, it would have been more meaningful if it took into consideration the role of global warming in the spread of Covid-19.

Tracing the origins of Covid-19 is a quest that must have rivaled a Michael Crichton sci-fi thriller. The team of international scientists pieced together evidence showing that man-induced deviations in temperature and atmospheric carbon dioxide content, among other factors, impacted natural habitats and ecosystems. In this ecological miasma, many bat species thrived and became hosts for new strains of coronaviruses.

Bats sold at an animal market in Wuhan, China are widely believed to have transmitted a mutant coronavirus to humans. In a matter of weeks, the rogue virus had attained pandemic proportions.

The World Health Organization estimates that climatic changes cause over 150,000 deaths annually. The Johns Hopkins University, on the other hand, has reported that Covid-19 has claimed more than 3 million lives.

The News Medical article cites the benefits of having a unified response to the two global crises. It would “allow for the overall improvement of public health as well as foster a sustainable economic future” and offer “a chance to protect the planet’s biodiversity and limit further changes to diverse ecosystems.”

These are rational and achievable goals. The challenge is to get everyone on the same page and create the synergy to see those goals through.