

STATEMENT OF REPUBLIC OF TURKEY

FOR

SPECIAL VIRTUAL SESSION FOR SBSTTA-24 AND SBI-03 ON BIODIVERSITY, ONE HEALTH AND COVID-19

The relationship between human, animal and ecosystem has existed from the very beginning of human history and has always been very complex. Changes occurring in ecosystems have direct impacts on human and animal health. Everything in nature has a task and everything is in balance. Human beings, as the primary consumer of natural assets, have a huge responsibility in maintaining this balance.

Destruction of nature neglecting sustainable and planned utilization ends up with many catastrophes such as pandemics. After adopting a settled life, human, plant and animal health problems have presented a grift pattern till today. After agricultural revolution diseases arose dramatically and consequently human searched treatment methods and utilised natural resources for healing. Following industrial revolution, more and more infections began to appear on human, animal and ecosystem triangle. The main reason of increasing numbers of diseases after industrial revolution is the ecological destruction. In this period, zoonotic diseases have spread globally and the numbers of zoonotic diseases increased incrementally. Today approximately 60– 75% of infectious diseases of humans are zoonotic.

Destruction of wildlife and condensing contacts between human and animal played huge roles on increasing impact of animal originated coronavirus infections. Global pandemic caused by SARS-cov-2 is an example of fatal zoonotic diseases. Unfortunately COVID 19 pandemic could not be stopped at the moment. But this tragedy has shown us how important it is to carry out interdisciplinary studies and the concept of ‘one health’. An integrated health approach binding human, animal and ecosystem, can be the only solution on preventing wildlife oriented infectious diseases. Human health can only be ensured by ‘wildlife and ecology health’. It is very important to integrate one health approach with post 2020 global biodiversity

framework and harmonise with both national and international goals bearing in mind these realities.

Keeping this reality in mind, Republic of Turkey has been working on projects especially focusing on wildlife oriented diseases and invasive species management. Department of Zoonotic Diseases working under Ministry of Health is conducting continuous programmes on combat with zoonotic diseases such as Crimean Congo Haemorrhagic Fever, Rabies, Anthrax, Echinococcosis, West Nile virus infection, tularaemia, and brucellosis.

Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry has launched a project on the supply of oral vaccination against rabies in Turkey. In the scope of the project oral vaccination will be supplied especially for foxes. The project area will be 26 provinces which wildlife oriented rabies is more frequent. Vaccination will be provided twice a year for a three year period.

Additionally, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry carried out a project on increasing awareness on wildlife originated zoonotic diseases. Within this regard, a handbook has been prepared and ten thousand copies distributed for free. The hunters were primarily focused within this project and the handbooks were distributed through hunting clubs and NGOs. The infections covered in the handbook were in accordance with the Ministry on Health's zoonotic diseases combat programme.

For an increased institutional capacity, Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry held a three day well attended seminar on wildlife oriented zoonotic diseases. The veterinarians involved in wildlife management were invited to the seminar and elaborated programme were held on frequently seen zoonotic infections.

As an emerging problem on ecosystems, invasive alien species and measures to prevent them is another priority area for us. Two projects focusing on 'Addressing Invasive Alien Species Threats in Turkey' have already been launched. The long term objective of the projects is to ensure resilience of ecosystems through strengthened capacities and investment in prevention, detection, control and management of Invasive Alien Species.

Turkey, with the conscious of the importance of biodiversity on the society and environmental health, continues successfully many other projects. Within the scope of the National Biodiversity Inventory and Monitoring project, which started in 2013 and completed in 2019, an inventory of all biodiversity richness of the country has been obtained and the species and areas that are currently being endangered or possess importance are being monitored. A great number of new species were recorded for the first time to the World literature. Undoubtedly the main purpose is to prepare the Biodiversity Map of our country and to protect nature most efficiently. As we all know, we cannot protect unless we know what we protect.

In order to conserve our natural resources, to ensure their sustainability and to take benefit efficiently, the threats were also determined and the data were stored in a database, and by taking the necessary measures, nature conservation policies are being developed.

In addition, traditional knowledge originating from Anatolia's thousands of years of history adds even more meaning to the availability of these natural sources. When the biological resources, traditional knowledge and biotechnology are brought together, it is possible to obtain numerous products that can accelerate the development of the country among many sectors with the consideration of the mainstreaming of biodiversity.

As a genetic resource provider country, Turkey, it is important to legally regulate the use of genetic resources and related traditional information in order to conserve its economic and social rights on traditional information and to establish institutional mechanisms as well as to ensure the benefits arising from their utilization.

Initiated in line with this need, the aim of the Recording of Traditional Knowledge Project is to compile record and protect traditional knowledge based on biological diversity, and to regulate access to this information in order to provide contribution of biodiversity to the economy and making our country benefit from industrial property rights based on our genetic resources. With the project, it is aimed to compile

traditional products information on health, Nutrition, Industry, Agriculture-livestock and other traditional uses and to construct a national traditional knowledge database.

With the conscious of the importance of mainstreaming biodiversity across all sectors, Biological Diversity Coordination Board has been established. The board is comprised of sub-committees, technical committees, Advisory and working groups which provide detailed technical information and reviews. In addition to related public institutions, universities, NGOs, chambers as well as private sector delegates are also invited to the Board.

Before hosting the 16th Conference of the Parties, our country is on its way to become one of the pioneering countries, aware of Biodiversity is not just a term of nature; on the contrary, it is necessary to protect nature with maximum coordination so that the future generations, and we can live in a healthy environment both today and tomorrow.

As a response to COVID 19, Ministry of Health is supporting 16 vaccine research studies as of today. After completing phase 2 and 3 steps, the vaccines are expected to be ready after April 2021. Preventive medicine and control measures are still in progress as it should be.

Covid 19 pandemic has shown us that the connection between human, animal and ecology is vitally important. Interventions on ecology and non-sensitive approaches towards human and animal relations have catastrophic results in our lives. One health concept has been proven to be essential for all life forms on Earth. Cross disciplinary studies are more important than ever.

Republic of Turkey recognizes the value and importance of One Health approach and we are ready and eager to work in cooperation to get over these difficult days.