

CBD/SBSTTA-SBI-SS/2/2: Special Session on “Biodiversity, One Health and the response to COVID-19”, 15-16 December 2020
EcoHealth Alliance statement

EcoHealth Alliance commends Parties and the Secretariat for prioritizing One Health solutions to promote health and biodiversity.

As the recent IPBES *Pandemics* report calls attention to, the alteration of ecosystems, intensified production systems, and exploitation of wildlife are creating new interactions between species and increasing opportunities for disease emergence. Yet in our review of public and animal health capacity assessments and plans from over 100 countries, the environment focus was severely lacking. **Mainstreaming biodiversity into health security requires Parties to emphasize disease risk reduction in NBSAPs, integrate health considerations into land use planning, and contribute to surveillance and risk management.**

We also raise attention to the *Urgent Needs for Global Wildlife Health* report, referred to on page 5 of the Discussion Note. **We urge Parties to adopt practical solutions to ensure endangered species are granted access to rapid diagnostics in disease emergencies.** Pandemics and epidemics must be recognized not only as a threat to human and domestic animal health, but also to biodiversity itself and a priority under the Post-2020 Biodiversity Framework.

We also condemn the inappropriate culling of bats and other wildlife often seen in response to outbreaks including COVID-19, and call on Parties to coordinate with health authorities and national One Health platforms to ensure responses are evidence-based. This includes the importance of Biodiversity-sensitive risk communication. We wish to highlight the “Living Safely with Bats” visual book that has been mobilized in over 20 countries to support community engagement and behavior change.

Finally, at global level, **it is critical that countries receive greater support from technical agencies and donors to build wildlife health systems.** Sustained coordination is needed to address the drivers of disease emergence and biodiversity loss as part of COVID-19 recovery efforts. EcoHealth Alliance is committed to supporting Parties and local NGOs in One Health efforts to prevent disease threats.