

Statement from GBIF (Global Biodiversity Information Facility) to the special virtual session of SBSTTA-24 and SBI-3 on biodiversity, One Health and COVID-19

Thank you, Chair. An important component of the One Health approach is to recognize the role of freely-available data on biodiversity in supporting research and decisions relating to human disease risk. A growing number of research studies are using biodiversity data shared through platforms such as GBIF to model the distributions of species that act as vectors, hosts and reservoirs of pathogens that cause disease in people. Such data-intensive research informs public health policy by assessing areas of disease risk, and how these will be affected by land use and climate change, among other factors. Focussed efforts are needed to identify and address gaps in accessible biodiversity data relevant to human health needs. These gaps are both spatial and taxonomic, with a shortage of shared data from many countries and regions, and among many of the species most relevant to disease risk. To support this need, GBIF has established a task group on mobilization and use of biodiversity data for research and policy on human diseases. With expertise from partners including the World Health Organization, EcoHealth Alliance and several international research institutions, this group will identify the priority needs and opportunities for mobilization of biodiversity data relevant for research on vector-borne and zoonotic diseases. GBIF will use this guidance to conduct targeted campaigns to fill data gaps by engaging relevant data holders and encouraging the sharing of datasets in standard formats to enable universal access. [As a first step towards these efforts, we launched a call for proposals yesterday for Asian data mobilization projects, as part of the Biodiversity Information Fund for Asia, supported by the Japanese Ministry of Environment, which will favour proposals from Asian institutions willing and able to share biodiversity data relevant to human diseases, among other key data streams including environmental DNA monitoring and data generated by environmental impact assessments.] [GBIF has also participated in a COVID task force led by the EU-funded Distributed System of Scientific Collections and the Consortium of European Taxonomic Facilities. Among its outcomes has been the 'liberation' of data from scientific literature on associations between bat species and viruses, bringing it into the public domain through GBIF.] We look forward to working with many CBD Parties in a sustained effort to ensure that all relevant biodiversity data helping to inform policies to reduce disease risk is accessible and useable by all, for the good of humanity. Thank you, Chair.