

Statement by Anne Larigauderie, Executive Secretary IPBES, 15 December 2020

Special virtual session on Biodiversity, One Health and COVID-19

15-16 December 2020

- IPBES released this past October a report from a workshop on biodiversity and pandemics held virtually this past July.
- This report was produced in light of the on-going pandemic, to help scope a future IPBES assessment on the synergies and trade-offs between food, water, health, and biodiversity in the context of climate change (nexus assessment).
- The report on biodiversity and pandemics was produced by a group of scientists selected by IPBES in response to a call for nominations. The workshop was chaired by Peter Daszak who spoke earlier today.
- The report is based on 700 scientific references, many very recent.
- Some of its major conclusions are summarized in paras 19 and 20 of the background document for this meeting and include the following:

I would like to briefly highlight four major conclusions.

1- The report places emerging diseases and pandemics in their ecological context:

- It explains that pandemics emerge from microbes found in nature, mostly on animals, and mostly in high biodiversity regions (tropical regions);
- It explains how pathogens spill over from infected animals into people when humans are brought into contact with infected animals because of large scale human driven activities;
- It says that infectious diseases and pandemics are becoming more frequent.

2-The report highlights the direct drivers of disease emergence which include:

- Land use change, such as deforestation or habitat fragmentation;
- Wildlife trade, which provides intimate contact among wildlife, livestock and humans;
- Climate change (shifts in host and vector ranges and migration of people and of domestic animals could lead to new opportunities for pathogens to find new hosts and for diseases to emerge).

3-The report also highlights the indirect drivers (or underlying causes) of emergence including:

- Consumption patterns (such as the demand for meat and other food, pet or medicine).

4- Finally, the workshop report highlights options for policy and action.

- These options place a focus on preventing the emergence of diseases by addressing the direct drivers of emergence through an ecological approach, as a complement to the medical approach which cures the disease once it has emerged;
- These options also underline the need for a One Health approach, which would build bridges among medical, veterinarian, forestry and conservation communities to become better equipped to prevent future emergences.

Thank you for your attention