

**African Group Statement for the virtual sessions of
SBSTTA-24 and SBI-03 on biodiversity, One Health and COVID-19'**

Thank you Co-Chairs,

I am taking the floor on behalf of the African region.

Africa would like to recognize the relevant studies done under the Convention regarding health and biodiversity, including recent activities undertaken by the Secretariat in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. The African Group appreciates all the inputs from a number of recent reports including the report of a workshop convened by IPBES; OECD; UNEP. The **GBO-5**, identify eighth transition and one health which recognizes the full range of linkages between biodiversity and all aspects of human health, and addresses the common drivers of biodiversity loss, disease risk and ill-health.

Distinguished Co-Chairs and dear colleagues,

The emergence of COVID-19 has reframed the discussions on the **Post 2020 global biodiversity framework** and demonstrated that governments must take a holistic, multi-sectoral approach to prevent, or at least decrease the severity of future pandemics. The One Health concept, which has gained traction due to COVID-19, provides a framework that addresses issues beyond health, including issues of livelihoods, and food security. This provides an important framework for ensuring that sustainable use of biodiversity and equitable sharing of the benefits of biodiversity can result in conservation outcomes for the good of people and the planet. In order to avert future planet and human health catastrophes, policies must keep low-income and marginalized communities, wild and domestic animals, and the environment in mind.

Ladies and gentleman, Africa remains concerned about the impact of the global pandemic on the Continent, which resulted in thousands of fatalities. The COVID-19 pandemic arrived at a moment when prospects for many African countries were promising. This pandemic has further exposed the entrenched inequalities in our societies. Therefore, there is no time to delay the right and access of women to contribute and meaningfully participate in decision making and policy development to ensure a gender responsive approach that is appropriately budgeted for in programmes targeting the development of women and girls so that no one is left behind.

Furthermore Co-chairs, the current COVID 19 crisis has clearly demonstrated that biodiversity rich countries are heavily dependent on tourism revenue to support their conservation efforts. The global travel restrictions have resulted in extensive revenue reductions for conservation which in turn has globally put significant biodiversity at risk. It is therefore important to ensure that the provision of resources for biodiversity is central to the elements incorporated into the Post 2020 Global Biodiversity Framework.

In response to the questions suggested in CBD/SBSTTA-SBI-SS/2/2 Africa is of the view that:

How can the Convention on Biological Diversity further contribute to an inclusive, transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to One Health that reflects the full range of biodiversity-health linkages?

Mainstreaming of biodiversity into different sectors has become a crucial vehicle to lead us to the expected outcomes given the current situation on the impact of zoonotic diseases on our economies.

The African Group is of the strong view that the programme of work on biodiversity and human health under the Convention needs to be enhanced and the current draft framework reflects a specific target on this matter.

Recovery plans for the biodiversity sector need to be incorporated into the monitoring plan to ensure that biodiversity impacts are addressed in a manner that continue to facilitate sustainable use of biological diversity as many communities in Africa depend on ecosystem services for their livelihoods. Therefore, such recovery plans should **include indicators that draw on the following:**

- Socioeconomic: to assess the health and well-being of people and address livelihoods;
- Political: to assess the political will and favourable policy conditions—in the form of new or modified laws that enable restoration or simply visible support from politicians;
- Resources mobilization to ensure that the recovery plans and activities are fully resourced; and to ensure that the provision of resources for biodiversity is central to the elements incorporated into the Post 2020 global biodiversity framework.
- Biophysical: to assess the physical change in land use and land cover over time.

Therefore, we need urgent actions that will take us to 2050 and the One Health approach is one of the key solutions to the biodiversity challenge affecting nature. These actions will need to be framed around immediate response, recovery and reorientation of the global economy to ensure a rights based approach that limits the burden on developing countries that are the custodians of biodiversity and ensures that they are able to meet their development imperatives and thereby achieve the SDG commitments.

How can the Convention on Biological Diversity further contribute to an inclusive, transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to One Health that reflects the full range of biodiversity-health linkages?

The One Health approach should be based on scientific evidence and draw on lessons and conclusions from the scientific work conducted by the eminent experts from all over the world. In view of the significant economic and social costs and impacts from COVID-19, it is important that the principle 15 of the Rio Declaration on the precautionary approach should prevail in situations of scientific uncertainty, such as in relation to the source of the COVID-19 outbreak, which remains unproven conclusively.

Taking into account, the results of the IPBES study on the pathogen reserves, the African Group requests for more information to shed light on the regional distribution

of those reserves and the sources of those potential risks indicated. In fact, Africa remains, as many developing countries, the least prepared continent and least equipped to deal either with the social, or with the economic costs of the spread of pandemics and their devastating impacts and sorrows. We therefore ask for the involvement of African experts in the relevant studies and research to allow them to identify potential risks and find appropriate local solutions.

We are aware also that the One Health approach requires a holistic approach, transcending all policy agendas, conventions and agreements. The synergy should be reflected in the goals, targets and indicators of those agendas, if we are to accomplish the commitment taken by the international community to leave no one behind. Towards this objective, Africa, and all the developing countries, should be given all the support needed, through stimulus packages, to more effectively recover economically and sustainably from COVID-19 impacts, and that their populations also be given all the medication and vaccines needed to fight against this pandemic.

How should the interlinkages between biodiversity, health and pandemic risk be reflected in the post-2020 global biodiversity framework?

The current draft of the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework features, for the first time, targets related to wildlife trade. However, we note that Target 8 highlights issues of ensuring benefits, including nutrition, food security, livelihoods, health and well-being, for people through sustainable management of wildlife. It is worth noting that COVID-19 is not just an immediate human health threat - it also poses a long-term socio-economic threat. Sustainable use of biodiversity can contribute to economic recovery and can be part of the solution. The indicators for this target must therefore measure the contribution of biodiversity to the food security, health, income, jobs and well-being of many rural economies and IPLCs. Policy responses to COVID-19 must use this data to take into account the socio-economic impacts on these communities and identify approaches needed that are equitable, just and participatory.

We also note that Targets 13, 14 and 15 are also relevant to the implementation of the One Health Approach, calling for biodiversity values to be mainstreamed across all sectors; ensuring production practices and supply chains are sustainable; and eliminating unsustainable consumption patterns, ensuring people everywhere understand and appreciate the value of biodiversity, and thus make responsible choices.

In conclusion chair:

Even if the link to wildlife trade this time is not proven, the Covid-19 is reframing risk management. The international trade in wild animals is governed by conventions, legislations and regulations that focus on over exploitation and conservation, not health. Many countries took practical steps to ban wildlife trade after the spreads of the pandemic. It remains true that specific action to mitigate wildlife trade risks must be set in the wider context of development (especially health) and conservation. Whilst this Pandemic is having a profound negative impact on sustainable development and our efforts to combat environmental degradation and eradicate poverty, it also presents opportunities to set our recovery on a path of transformative sustainable development. Reiterating decision 14/4 wherein the COP recognized the importance of ecosystem-based approaches for the delivery of multiple benefits to health and well-being, and

invites Governments and other relevant stakeholders to make use of the new Biodiversity inclusive One Health Guidance. Africa would like to stress that, safeguarding biodiversity through ecosystem management and /or restoration interventions is both cost-effective and sustainable, which can deliver measurable positive climate change adaptation and mitigation contributions as well as socio-economic development co-benefits in the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic.