

Second special virtual session on biodiversity, One Health and COVID-19

Dear Mrs Chair,

Please allow me to express our compassion with all suffering from the current COVID-19 pandemic. The high economic and social cost of the pandemic again exemplifies the crucial importance of safeguarding biodiversity, biodiversity mainstreaming and the importance of a One Health approach. In that regard, BE highlights IPBES's expert group message that global strategies to prevent pandemics based on biodiversity protection, restoration and sustainable use would cost a lot less than the average annual economic damages caused by current and future pandemics.

Belgium would like to underline the importance of the three objectives of the CBD for integrated transdisciplinary and structural One Health approaches, balancing animal, plant, ecosystem and human health. Furthermore a One Health approach should incorporate both nature related human health risks, such as the origin of COVID-19, and nature related human health and welfare benefits.

A One Health approach should take into account structural socio-economic human drivers such as ecological disruption and unsustainable consumption and production patterns. We need to enhance understanding of the importance of the CBD and its three objectives for One Health prevention, preparedness, early detection and action, whilst taking into account local stakeholder involvement, especially from more vulnerable populations.

BE fully supports the list of approaches and options listed in the discussion note prepared by the Secretariat to integrate biodiversity considerations into stimulus and recovery measures. Indeed, we must ensure that economic recovery measures contribute to the conservation, restoration and sustainable use of biological diversity and do not compromise biodiversity, to build back better.

Belgium believes it is important to reinforce the links between biodiversity and health, in a One Health approach, throughout the entire post-2020 global biodiversity framework, in all relevant goals and targets highlighting the crucial roles of conservation, restoration and sustainable management of all components of biodiversity for health. Furthermore, 2 specific actions can be mentioned: first we support an ambitious target tackling illegal harvesting, trade and use of wild species, and second we want to highlight the need to address biosecurity issues related to pandemics risks, to improve biosecurity at all levels, and in relation to local and international trade.

With this statement, Belgium reiterates previous CBD-decisions in support of One Health, and supports most conclusions of the recent IPBES Pandemics Workshop Report.

Thank you, madam chair.