

On behalf of World Animal Protection, it is my pleasure to contribute our organization's animal welfare perspective to this special session.

The discussion note draws on a number of reports that recognize the wildlife trade as a key driver of pandemic risk. If we acknowledge that animal exploitation and the wildlife trade are a key cause of the COVID-19 pandemic as well as the biodiversity crisis, it stands to reason that curbing the wildlife trade must be an essential element of the solution.

The Convention on Biological Diversity can further contribute to an inclusive, transdisciplinary and cross-sectoral approach to One Health by including animal welfare. 75% of new and emerging infectious diseases impacting human health originate in animals, mainly wildlife. This pandemic and previous epidemics are fundamentally linked to our exploitation of animals and nature.

When animals are kept or traded in small, crowded, unnatural and unsanitary conditions, they become stressed, making them more vulnerable to infections and more infectious. And when they are kept in close proximity with animals they wouldn't normally encounter in the wild it is the ideal environment for deadly diseases to emerge and spread. This describes the wildlife trade.

A One Health, One Welfare approach recognizes the welfare of animals, our environment and people are interconnected. If we ignore animal welfare, we miss an important opportunity to holistically, comprehensively and simultaneously address the current health, biodiversity and climate change crises.

The Convention on Biological Diversity can help ensure that responses to COVID-19, 'build back better' by encouraging that:

- international development assistance support biodiversity protection, including by reducing wildlife consumption and supporting a more widespread transition to humane, sustainable and resilient livelihoods.
- government bailouts include conditions for improving biodiversity, animal welfare and pandemic prevention and support is provided for transitioning high risk industries and the development of sustainable alternatives.
- governments integrate the economic cost of pandemics into policies and budgets as recommended in the 2020 IPBES report.

We agree that transformative change is needed and so we must set a more ambitious goal to phase out the commercial trade in wild animals and wild animal products to significantly reduce pandemic risk, biodiversity loss and animal suffering. We must change our relationship with nature and stop seeing wild animals simply as commodities but instead recognize them as sentient beings with intrinsic rights to a wild life.

We agree that a preventative approach is needed and so we cannot continue to allow the commercial trade in species until there is a disease outbreak or the species is on the brink of extinction. For by then it is too late.

While the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development may be people-centred, the Agenda recognizes that the welfare of people depends entirely on the welfare of the ecosystems in

which we live and, increasingly, that the welfare of these ecosystems depends on our collective ability to protect them. Animals are a critical part of our global ecosystem.

Thank you.

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