

Statement from the Cohab Initiative Secretariat (Co-operation on Health and Biodiversity) on Agenda Item 10: Biodiversity and Health

For over 20 years the Convention on Biological Diversity has been the leading multilateral forum addressing the importance of biodiversity to human health and well-being. Work programmes under the CBD have greatly increased awareness within governments and civil society of the need to connect the global priorities of biodiversity and health, and the CBD Secretariat has been instrumental in driving greater collaboration on these issues within and between governments, intergovernmental agencies and non-governmental organisations. It is important that these efforts continue.

Decisions of successive Conferences of the Parties since 2006, supported by SBSTTA, have facilitated mainstreaming of health priorities into policies on biodiversity conservation, and the landmark decision from CBD COP 16 in Cali adopting the first Global Action Plan on Biodiversity and Health ([decision 16/19](#)) provides a key driver for mainstreaming biodiversity into the activities of the health sector. However, significant additional work remains to be done.

The Cohab Initiative Secretariat (Cohab) believes that SBSTTA 27 is an important opportunity to consider how the efforts of Parties to implement the Global Action Plan at national and sub-national levels can best be supported through a follow-up decision at COP 17 in Yerevan, and how the CBD's wider work programme on health can be sustained and strengthened in order to foster greater global partnerships on health and biodiversity, at a time when the need for co-operation on this issue has never been greater.

We encourage delegates here in Panama to consider how recommendations to COP 17 arising from the Biodiversity and Health agenda item can build on the Cali decision, and to prioritise measures which can:

- 1) Support Parties in their efforts to interpret and implement the Global Action Plan in their national contexts;
- 2) Support Parties with the integration of the Global Action Plan into plans of implementation for the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework;
- 3) Provide greater certainty on the longer-term capacity of the CBD Secretariat to sustain the programme of work on health, so that the important linkages between health and biodiversity continue to receive their due attention under the Convention;
- 4) Facilitate greater co-operation on health and biodiversity between the CBD Secretariat and other relevant organisations and initiatives including the Quadripartite Alliance for One Health and its member organisations;
- 5) Foster greater policy coherence and integration with other multilateral processes and agreements for which linkages between health and biodiversity are an increasingly urgent area for action and offer a key point of crossover; this should include co-ordination with the other Rio Conventions and other multilateral environmental agreements, and engagement with processes under the WHO Pandemic Agreement;

- 6) Further promote coherence and consistency between the programme of work on health and other work programmes under the CBD, particularly regarding Article 8(j), Agricultural Biodiversity, Climate Change, Forest Biodiversity, Wildlife Management, Protected Areas, Synthetic Biology, and Marine and Coastal Biodiversity.

Cohab supports the ongoing work of the CBD Secretariat to develop integrated science-based indicators, metrics and progress measurement tools on biodiversity and health, pursuant to COP [decision 14/4](#) (para 13(a)). We encourage SBSTTA experts and Parties to continue to facilitate this work, including by widely promoting and engaging with the upcoming peer review process, and providing all appropriate assistance to the Secretariat as it seeks to complete this work ahead of COP 17. We understand the concerns which have been raised by some Parties and experts regarding the timeframes of this process and the role of SBSTTA; we encourage this meeting to arrive at a solution(s) which can avoid postponing the adoption of these indicators beyond COP 17, unless some additional or alternative scientifically valid resources or supports can be identified or made available to Parties in the interim to facilitate full implementation of the Global Action Plan without delay. Regardless, SBSTTA should affirm that the expectation of the outputs from this process should not in itself become grounds for delay in implementing the Global Action Plan at any level.

Cohab further encourages SBSTTA to acknowledge and respond to the key messages of the [IPBES Nexus Assessment](#), which not only highlight the interlinkages between biodiversity, health, food, water, and climate change, but clearly indicate that policy measures which continue to attempt to address these global issues in isolation rather than in an integrated, coherent manner will not achieve their intended results, and can lead to unintended consequences to the detriment of people and planet.

With regards to policy coherence and integration, we note with concern that interpretations of One Health across various multilateral forums can differ in the degree with which biodiversity is considered, despite the fact that the modern concept of One Health largely emerged from the ecosystem approach and the science of conservation medicine. This inconsistency presents a barrier to mainstreaming biodiversity within the health sector, reinforces siloed approaches, and may ultimately limit the effectiveness of some “One Health” strategies. To help address this, SBSTTA should seek to strengthen the capacity of the CBD Secretariat to engage and co-operate with relevant international organisations and processes. To this end, SBSTTA could recommend that the [Interagency Liaison Group on Biodiversity and Health](#), chaired by the CBD Secretariat with WHO from 2015 and 2020, be renewed at the earliest opportunity.

Finally, Cohab urges SBSTTA to explicitly recognise the importance of policies which promote, conserve and strengthen the intimate interconnections between biodiversity and culture, and to continue to advance inclusive, human rights-based approaches in its recommendations. These are necessary components for sustainable development and the implementation of the KMGBF, and are an absolute prerequisite for effective action on the linkages between biodiversity and health.

[Cohab Initiative Secretariat](#), 14th October 2025