

**STATEMENT BY ELIZABETH MARUMA MREMA**  
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on the occasion of

**WORLD HEALTH DAY**

7 APRIL 2022

*"Our Planet, Our Health"*

The COVID-19 pandemic has not only disrupted health systems and the global economy, it has shaken to the core our belief in what was once considered "normal", such as the way we work and interact with each other.

It has also led many people to question the sustainability of our consumption patterns, how we live our day-to-day lives, and how human activities impact the very biodiversity critical for a sustainable future.

As we recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, we have a shared responsibility to ensure that we build on lessons learned. We must shift away from 'business as usual'.

One key lesson is that the health of the planet is intimately connected to the health of people. And if we are to build a fairer, greener, healthier future, we must care for our planet the way we do about our own personal health.

Climate change, biodiversity loss, pollution: these are three major environmental challenges that impact our health. They all need to be tackled in an integrated and complementary manner. According to the World Economic Forum, nature loss, together with climate action failure and extreme weather<sup>1</sup>, has been identified as one of the most severe environmental risks facing our planet. Moreover, the World Health Organization has stated that each year over 13 million deaths worldwide can be attributed to avoidable environmental causes.

As we celebrate the 2022 World Health Day, and its theme "Our Planet, Our Health," all stakeholders must work together to make this year a critical turning point towards a fairer and healthier world. A world where nature and biodiversity are recognized for their true value to human health and well-being. Furthermore, it is imperative that we recognize that climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution are genuine public health crisis.

The post-2020 global biodiversity framework, currently being negotiated under the auspices of the Convention on Biological Diversity, represents a historic opportunity to set an example of a global agreement for effective action on biodiversity, and subsequently advance the health and well-being of all.

In fact, one could argue that the post-2020 framework represents our best hope of living a life in harmony with nature. But, critically, this can only be achieved through coordinated efforts and strong leadership, and by tackling head-on the triple environmental crisis in order to safeguard the sustainability of the planet and that of the health and well-being of its people.

There is no time to waste, the time to act is now.

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<sup>1</sup> World Economic Forum, The Global Risks Report 2022, 17th edition, Insight report, [www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF\\_The\\_Global\\_Risks\\_Report\\_2022.pdf](http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_The_Global_Risks_Report_2022.pdf).

