

## UNEA 5 Preparations: Comments from World Animal Net (WAN)

### Background Document for Agenda Item 2 of the Committee of Permanent Representatives Subcommittee Meeting Thursday 2 July 2020: Preparations for UNEA5 Revised note on the preparations for the fifth session of the United Nations Environment Assembly - "Strengthening Actions for Nature to Achieve the Sustainable Development Goals"

Please find below comments and suggestions from World Animal Net (WAN) on the "Background Document for Agenda Item 2: Preparations for UNEA5".

#### Paras 6 and 7

Both of these paragraphs focus on biodiversity and ecosystems, and there is no specific mention of our relationship with animals, wild or domestic. Given the origins of COVID-19 and the most likely causes of future pandemics, it is untenable that animals continue to be ignored in this equation. It would be greatly preferable to speak in terms of "**nature and animals**". The treatment of sentient animals as inanimate resources is a significant contributor to emerging diseases, and language used should not exacerbate or support this.

#### Para 6

We feel that instead of "Governments should not respond to the COVID-19 crisis by making policy and investment decisions that exacerbate existing crises such as air pollution and the climate emergency", this should be made more comprehensive, along the lines of: "Governments should not respond to the COVID-19 crisis by making policy and investment decisions that exacerbate existing crises such as the climate emergency, biodiversity loss and pollution, or create future crises including the emergence and spreading of future pandemics.

In general, throughout the document the prevention of future pandemics should be addressed, as well as the recovery from COVID-19. Future prevention is every bit as important as recovery, and possibly more so, given the ability of viruses to mutate into ever-greater states of efficiency.

#### Para 7

We suggest an amendment from "Reforms and investments over the next decade must embrace sustainable consumption and production patterns to simultaneously re-build our economies and address the systemic threats to biodiversity, ecosystem services and human health" to:

"Reforms and investments over the next decade must build towards the well-being of people, nature and animals – addressing threats to climate, biodiversity and pollution, and preventing future pandemics; and moving towards healthy and sustainable consumption and production patterns, whilst rebuilding and transforming our economies."

#### Para 15

The four proposed action areas are key issues to be addressed. However, as drafted, the wording is extremely utilitarian. Nature does not exist **for** any of these issues, however important to us humans. We urge amendment to:

Action area 1: Nature ~~for~~and Poverty Eradication, Jobs and Economic Prosperity

Action area 2: Nature ~~for~~and Human and Ecosystem Health

Action area 3: Nature ~~for~~and Climate

Action area 4: Nature ~~for~~and Sustainable Food Systems

Box 2: Nature for Human and Ecosystems Health (Examples of potential actions)

When talking about the impact and emergence of zoonotic diseases, only the illegal wildlife trade is mentioned. However, zoonoses are agnostic of legality, so referring to the “commercial trade” of wildlife would be more accurate. Also, there is nothing about risks in domestic animals (or indeed food waste).

### **Box 3: Nature for Climate (Examples of potential actions)**

The term “climate smart” has been co-opted by corporations and used for “green-washing”, as explained in this [Guardian article](#) on “Why ‘climate-smart agriculture’ isn’t all it’s cracked up to be”.

We would suggest the amendment of this sentence: “It can also provide a framework for promoting climate smart agriculture thus contributing to the achievement of multiple objectives of food security, economic development, climate mitigation and adaptation, and poverty reduction” to something along the following lines:

“It can also provide a framework for promoting food and agriculture systems which protect against adverse environmental impacts, such as climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution, whilst meeting multiple societal objectives such as food security, livelihoods, poverty alleviation, and human and animal health and well-being.”

The latter have been shown by COVID-19 to be of predominant importance.

### **Box 4 Nature for Sustainable Food Systems (examples of potential actions)**

This box needs careful consideration and redrafting. For example:

\*Harmful subsidies must be removed across the food/agriculture chain, not just in respect of fish.

\* There should be no funding or investment in industrial livestock production. Instead this should be re-targeted towards sustainable food systems aimed at the achievement of food security with nutritious, healthy and safe food produced locally by regenerative methods which avoid biodiversity loss, environmental degradation and pollution. IPBES and the European Commission identify organic farming, agro-ecology, agro-forestry, silvo-pastoral systems and low-intensive permanent grassland as sustainable practices.<sup>ii iii</sup> Clearly, maximum sustainability can be achieved through support for the transition to predominantly plant-based diets which are safer, healthier and immune-boosting, as recommended by the Eat-Lancet commission<sup>iv</sup>.

\*Here again, ending the “illegal” wildlife trade. Comments above apply – zoonoses are agnostic to legality.

This section should recognise the need to transform our broken food systems. It does not capture the complexity or richness of either the need for change, or the many avenues that are open for change to occur. Some of the richness of the Oslo Town Hall debates (and subsequent webinars) should also be brought in.

It is important that this action point is used to dig into the transformative changes needed in our food systems, in advance of the Food Summit. This will take deeper analysis, and the development of improved policy frameworks, as well as small “nature-based solutions”.

#### **V. Enhancing the authority, impact and relevance of the Assembly through a limited set of ambitious resolutions and decisions**

We agree that a limited number of ambitious and comprehensive resolutions would be far preferable. These would need to be based on a thorough analysis of the themes, and avenues, for transformative change.

#### **VII. Way forward**

We would also like to suggest that actions begin now – with evaluated pilot projects, which could be showcased at UNEA 5, and subsequently rolled out. We feel this would be inspirational, and practical – instead of the “business-as-usual” pronouncements, which give many little faith in the prospect of real action going forward.

Why not make this an action-based UNEA, because in the case of politics, actions certainly speak louder than words.

Our networks would be happy to identify some promising and solutionary projects for inclusion.

References:

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<sup>i</sup> Background Document for Agenda Item 2: Preparations for UNEA5  
<https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/32800/Agenda%20Item%20%20Note%20on%20UNEA%205%20preparations%20-%20CPR%20meeting%20%20July.pdf?sequence=1&isAllowed=y>

<sup>ii</sup> IPBES, 2019. *Op.Cit.*

<sup>iii</sup> European Commission, 2020. EU Biodiversity Strategy for 2030. COM(2020) 380 final

<sup>iv</sup> Eat-Lancet Commission Summary Report. <https://eatforum.org/eat-lancet-commission/eat-lancet-commission-summary-report/>