

WAN Comments on Draft Outline of the UNEA 5 Ministerial Declaration

In general, we believe it would be beneficial for the Ministerial Declaration to contain sections for each of the subthemes that have been discussed for UNEA 5:

- Action area 1: Nature for Poverty Eradication, Jobs and Economic Recovery
- Action area 2: Nature for Human and Ecosystem Health
- Action area 3: Nature for Climate
- Action area 4: Nature for Sustainable Food Systems

Suggestions for the Vision

We would suggest that the Vision should be broader than biodiversity loss alone, although we recognize the salience of this issue during the time of UNEA 5, with the Convention on Biological Diversity Conference of the Parties and the agreement of the Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) just a few months away. However, many of the key decisions will have been made regarding the GBF by UNEA 5. We recommend that the Vision should address biodiversity in addition to the other existential threats we currently face: climate change and the prevention of future pandemics. It would also be good if the theme could address pollution, as an issue which was meant to be carried forward through future UNEAs.

Introduction, Paragraph 1

This paragraph rightfully provides a discussion of the renewed sense of connectivity between humans and nature in the wake of COVID-19. However, it is really necessary here to note that it is not only the connection between humans and nature, it is the connection between humans, *animals* and nature. This connection is scientifically demonstrated and known as *One Health*. One Health was raised as an issue of relevance in UNEA's contribution to the High Level Political Forum. It also was foundational to UNEP's recent report, *Preventing the Next Pandemic*, which identified seven drivers of pandemics, including increased demand for animal protein, increased intensification in the production of animal products, and the use and exploitation of wildlife.

It is very important that the Ministerial Declaration of UNEA 5 recognizes the important linkages of One Health, and that it specifically acknowledges *animals*. Excluding animals and only mentioning nature fails to acknowledge the role that domestic animals (i.e. farmed animal production) plays in increasing pandemic risk, and the fact that much of the wildlife trade occurs outside of nature.

We would also suggest that the concept of *One Welfare*¹ be considered. One Welfare is based on the same connections as One Health (humans, animals, environment/nature), but looks through a wider lens than simply health interactions, and we believe this holistic approach is more applicable and useful to considering the myriad linkages across the Sustainable Development Agenda (i.e. livelihoods, food security, water scarcity, climate change, poverty).

¹ One Welfare World. <https://www.onewelfareworld.org/>

Introduction, Paragraph 2

Again, this focuses heavily on biodiversity loss. We suggest that it should address climate change, pollution, and the other issues listed in the second sentence with the same weight as that which is on biodiversity in the first sentence.

We are glad to see the call for holistic and transformative approaches in this paragraph, and hope that in the final Ministerial Declaration, this might provide space for recognition of animals, One Health and One Welfare, rather than the continuation of linkages to animals from the environment and human health/wellbeing being treated in a silo.

Introduction, Paragraph 3

We are pleased to see IPBES' work on transformative change highlighted here, and encourage the continued call to this issue. Post-Covid-19, we have expected greater ambition and action towards transformative change, but have been disappointed to see business as usual to continue. It is important that the Ministerial Declaration is strong on the need for truly transformative change.

Green Recovery, Paragraph 1

The second-to-last sentence of this paragraph describes activities that Ministers can take. We suggest that this list should also include the need to develop policies which can prevent future pandemics and implement a One Health and/or One Welfare approach. In practice, this might mean fostering collaboration with other government agencies, such as the competent authorities for human and public health, and veterinary authorities responsible for *inter alia* the health of farmed animals, monitoring disease risk in wildlife populations and preventing future spillover events.

Healthy Ecosystems, Healthy People

Again, we are very surprised that this section does not mention One Health. Similarly, we also note that this section again fails to recognize that it is not just the interlinkages between humans and nature, but humans, *animals*, and nature. For example, "Zoonotic diseases like COVID-19 expose the close relationship between nature and people" provides a limited view of the reality of the situation. Previously, swine flu was a zoonotic disease which arose from the intensive farming of pigs. As noted in UNEP's recent report, the increased demand for animal products and intensification of production are key factors that contribute not only directly to human health risks, but also indirectly through encouraging land use change which damages nature and brings humans in closer contact with wild animals. The direct contact between humans and wild animals in the wildlife trade also goes beyond simply linkages between humans and nature. For example, animals show increasing levels of infection rate with each step taken in the trade from capture to market (more animals being kept in cramped, stressful and unhygienic conditions increases the spread of disease between capture and consumption).² At this point, it is clear that this is not just an issue of "nature", but of "animals". We believe that being explicit on this point is important because without clearly and specifically identifying the root causes of disease risk, it will not be possible address them and prevent future pandemics. Referring only to nature obscures the problems at hand.

² Wildlife Trade Spreads Coronaviruses as Animals Get to Market. New York Times. 19 June 2020. <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/06/19/science/coronavirus-rats-vietnam.html>

As the introduction of the Ministerial Declaration Outline calls for holistic approaches, we encourage the document to lead by example by taking a scientifically-supported One Health and One Welfare approach to this issue, and integrating animal health and welfare into considerations of human and environmental health.

Lastly, this section should highlight the seven drivers of pandemic risk identified in UNEP's report, and, importantly, recommend actions Ministers can take to address these drivers head on.

Sustainable Food Systems

We note that this section appears to focus somewhat heavily on the supply side of food systems, when demand should also be addressed. The following sentence is an example:

“They can be advanced through sustainable agriculture, aquaculture and livestock systems, the safeguarding of native species, varieties, breeds and habitats, and ecological restoration.”

It is important that demand is addressed and actions taken to shift diets towards more sustainable and healthy plant-rich diets. The recent State of Food Security and Nutrition 2020³ report explores in depth the hidden health and environmental costs of current diets and the ways in which plant-rich diets can make major contributions and progress on these issues. It is important that actions which can make healthy and environmentally friendly plant-based diets more affordable to the global population are clearly outlined for Ministers, including through the shifting of subsidies and tax incentives/penalties to promote such diets.

Lastly, it is important to note the ways in which a transition to plant-rich diets can contribute to livelihoods. A recent joint report between the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the Inter-American Development Bank demonstrates that plant-based food production could create 19 million jobs in Latin America and the Caribbean alone.⁴

³ FAO, IFAD, UNICEF, WFP and WHO. 2020. The State of Food Security and Nutrition in the World 2020. Transforming food systems for affordable healthy diets. Rome, FAO. <https://doi.org/10.4060/ca9692en>

⁴ Saget, Catherine, Vogt-Schilb, Adrien and Luu, Trang (2020). Jobs in a Net-Zero Emissions Future in Latin America and the Caribbean. Inter-American Development Bank and International Labour Organization, Washington D.C. and Geneva.