

7TH AFRICA ANIMAL WELFARE CONFERENCE -ACTION 2023

Saint Famille Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda

25-27 September 2023

Theme:

Navigating the delicate balance of animal welfare, climate change and development: concerted actions towards a healthy and sustainable environment

CONCEPT NOTE

Introduction and Background

In Africa, animals are an essential livelihood support resource among majority of communities all over the continent, especially in the rural and peri urban parts of most countries. It is also easy to observe that animals are embedded in most aspects of the peoples' lives including dressing, what people eat and how people earn and maintain their wealth. It is therefore not a surprise that in the recent years, a trend is emerging whereby discussions on development and socioeconomics will be almost incomplete without interrogating the place of animals, and to a large extent the role of animal welfare in overall developmental matters.

From the first conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2017, the Africa Animal Welfare Conference (AAWC), now in its 7th year, has gradually gained ground as a premier continental forum for discussion of animal welfare and its related contexts of health, sustainable development and environmental conservation in Africa. This annual event has become a vaulted platform of discussion on a broad array of issues including the need to recognize and enhance the welfare of animals, the urgency of environmental protection, the interconnection of animal welfare, environmental sustainability and human health, and the contribution of animals to achievement of Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs).

The conference targets all stakeholders in animal welfare and environmental sectors, and draws its participants from governments and government agencies, African Union, academia, students, civil society, United Nations, researchers, animal welfare supporters and all cadres of practitioners in veterinary and animal health professions.

The conference is based on the philosophy that animals are sentient beings and should not suffer at the hands of people, as oftentimes happens, and they should always enjoy the Five Freedoms. Its mission is therefore to annually congregate animal welfare stakeholders to deliberate on critical issues that affect animals, the environment and people, and seek solutions to prevailing challenges as appropriate.

Over the last six conferences, some pertinent matters have recurrently been identified as follows:

- That there is need to work with governments and all stakeholders in improving animal welfare in Africa to enhance development and environmental sustainability
- The need for moving a resolution on animal welfare at the United Nations Environment Assembly to elevate animal welfare issues to the global arena.
- There is need to pay attention to animal law and animal welfare and policies and legislation across the continent.
- The importance of involving youth and women in environmental and animal welfare matters in the continent cannot be underestimated and requires proactive action.
- The need to pursue partnerships with humanitarian agencies to improve animal welfare and especially animals in disaster or emergency situations.
- The need to promote sustainable production and consumption with sensitivity to animal welfare and the environment.
- The need to coordinate as appropriate to address the interconnection of animal welfare, the environment and human health.

The centrality of the Conference has been buttressed by the inclusion of discussions regarding the Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa (AWSA) as a pivotal step towards actualizing the Africa Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW), under the coordination of African Union Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR).

The 7th Africa Animal Welfare Conference-Action 2023

1.Venue and date

The 7th Africa Animal Welfare Conference is scheduled to take place at **Sainte Famille Hotel, Kigali, Rwanda, from 25th to 27th September 2023**. It is planned as a hybrid event comprising in-person attendance and on -line participation. Delegates attending in-person will be expected to arrive in Rwanda on 24th September and depart on 28th September 2023.

The proceedings will be delivered through speeches, goodwill messages, oral and poster presentations, panel discussions and question and answer sessions.

2.Theme:

This conference will be modelled around the following theme:

Navigating the delicate balance of animal welfare, climate change and development: concerted actions towards a healthy and sustainable environment

The theme highlights the clear realization that as Africa experiences a major spurt in its growth in diverse sectors, there is a delicate equilibrium that must be maintained in the face of changing climate patterns affecting humans and animals.

It has been acknowledged that Africa is experiencing a rapid mobilization of efforts towards development, and this is coupled with a surge in its human population, which is largely youthful. The energy and food demands of such a significant rise must be appreciated and adequate preparations to manage the situation need to be considered. There is increased demand for food, in terms of both quality and quantity, there is more pressure on land for setting up factories, for crop and animal farming, for housing, for extraction of mineral resources, among other needs.

It is acknowledged that development is a necessary facet of any modern-day country and must happen; equally, it must be realized that animals need to find space within our homesteads, protected areas and natural habitats. All this is happening against the backdrop of increasingly erratic climatic patterns globally, and more so within the continent. Seasons of rainfall are no longer predictable with ease; climate change has ushered in an era of the uncertainty of droughts and floods resulting in destruction, distress and confusion, many times resulting in loss of food and habitat for animals and people. This presents a planning nightmare and compromises food security for animals and humans, while easily leading to environmental catastrophes.

This emerging scenario calls for adaption and other innovative approaches to enhance coping mechanisms that can mitigate the adverse effects of climate change affecting both people and animals and seek to maintain a level of environmental dignity.

Therefore, a balance must be reached to ensure that we all gain from this symbiotic relationship, as we seek to exploit the resources thereon and attain the needed development, and to do this in a manner that ensures the preservation of our environment.

The theme will guide the conference deliberations in looking at the various concerted efforts that have been made in Africa and globally, towards achieving sufficient food for people and feed for animals, advancing in brick and mortar as well as technological development and maintaining a healthy and sustainable environment for all of us on this earth.

3.Conference objectives

This 7th Conference will seek to achieve the following objectives.

1. To outline the need to ensure actions toward balancing the need for human development and environmental sustainability

- 2.To illustrate progress towards mainstreaming Animal Welfare in the United Nations and preparations towards UNEA 6
- 3.To reflect on the progress of implementation of AWSA through the Africa Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW).
- 4.To exchange knowledge and best practices towards enhancing animal welfare, environmental sustainability and human development
- 5.To develop a critical mass of sensitized animal welfare stakeholders in Africa to champion and support the emerging animal welfare, sustainable development and environment agenda in the continent
- 6.To entrench among stakeholders and communities in Africa their role in improving animal welfare and supporting environmental conservation in Africa.
- 7.To advance linkages and networking among stakeholders in animal welfare, environment, development and related sectors in Africa.

4.Expected Outputs and Outcomes

- Review and commit to necessary action plans that need to be taken towards enhancing animal welfare in Africa.
- Enhanced support for animal welfare and environmental policies from government institutions and other key stakeholders in Africa
- Conference report, including resolutions.
- Conference papers and presentations

5.Conference Organizers

The Conference is jointly organized by United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), African Union InterAfrican Union for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) and Africa Network for Animal Welfare.

They are supported by a Conference Organising Committee and will work in partnership with the Government of Rwanda through the ministries of Agriculture and Animal Resources, and Environment.

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