

## Contribution of the UN Environment Assembly to the 2020 High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development, Committee of Permanent Representatives Subcommittee Meeting

Cruelty Free International is the World leading animal protection organisation that seeks to end animal experiments. Cruelty Free International is an ECOSOC and UNEP accredited NGO.

1. Key policies and measures to ensure “accelerated action and transformative pathways” for realizing the decade of action and delivery for sustainable development

Responsible Consumption and Production is not only crucial in its own right but is also essential for achieving many other SDGs including 6,7,11,13,14,15, and 17. Even amongst the highest-ranking countries, there are performance gaps in the achievement of SDG 12.<sup>1</sup> Cruelty Free International welcomes the UN Environment Assembly’s call to upscale efforts around SDG 12 at all levels and to promote sustainable lifestyles.

In the 2019 SDG Report, the Secretary General is right to say that we need more ambition for this Decade of Action and the report calls for more action to mainstream sustainable practices across the economy and to recognise the social as well as economic benefits of responsible consumption and production.

One important way to accelerate action is to harness partnership between citizens and business and to enable ordinary people to contribute in their everyday actions to helping to achieve the Goals.

At Cruelty Free International, we firmly believe that one important responsible way to consume and produce is to remove animal testing from supply chains.

Consumers around the world want to be able to shop cruelty free. They want to purchase responsibly, and they want the companies they purchase from to be ethically responsible producers. On World Animal Day 2018, Cruelty Free International and The Body Shop brought the voices of over eight million people from more than 60 countries to the UN in New York calling for a global end to the use of animals in cosmetics testing.

Thousands of cosmetics brands are approved as cruelty free by the Leaping Bunny programme to demonstrate their commitment to ending animal testing as part of their quest to be responsible producers.

More and more countries are putting in place legislation to prohibit or restrict the use of animals in cosmetics testing yet for this to be a global effort that contributes to SDG 12, more is needed. We need a global framework so that consumers everywhere can make a

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<sup>1</sup> Sustainable Development Solutions Network, *Sustainable Development Report 2019*, (Sustainable Development Solutions Network, June 2019).

cruelty free choice and help accelerate progress towards responsible consumption and production.

2. Contribution of the intergovernmental body to accelerated action and transformative pathways and realizing the decade of action and delivery for achieving the 2030 Agenda within its area of responsibility (including its cooperation with ECOSOC and other intergovernmental bodies).

The UN's Harmony with Nature Resolution states the need for 'avoiding harmful practice against animals, plants, microorganisms and non-living environments contributes to the coexistence of humankind in harmony with nature,'<sup>2</sup> whilst the Ministerial Declaration of the UN Environment Assembly at its fourth session proposed that member states, manufacturers, retailers and relevant stakeholders 'to enhance their collaboration to enable consumers and public authorities to make informed choices, including through the provision of reliable consumer information'.<sup>3</sup> Sending a signal globally that removing animal testing from supply chains for products like cosmetics would contribute to achieving the aims of both resolutions.

When the European Union took the decision to prohibit the use of animals to test the safety of cosmetics ingredients irrespective of the availability of non-animal testing methods from 2013, there was a huge incentive on all stakeholders, including industry, to accelerate the development and validations of new approach methodologies (NAMs). There is widespread agreement that the work that has gone into these NAMs has impacts beyond cosmetics into other areas of product safety and into life sciences. In his February 2020 address to the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Bill Gates – co-founder of the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation which partners with the UN on a range of SDG delivery projects – talked about how science is 'giving us the opportunity to improve lives more rapidly than ever'. However, he also pointed out that 'we'll only make the most of that potential if we ensure that these tools reach everyone who needs them, including the poorest people in the world'. A neglected but important way to accelerate transformative pathways and realise the decade of action is to increase funding for NAMs, speed up processes for validating NAMs and find ways to share data from NAMs. Bill Gates highlighted one example of this technology, the use of organs-on-chips. He said, "One tool that's helping us understand how to optimize the gut microbiome is technology called "organs-on-a-chip." In simple terms, this technology allows in vitro modelling of human organs in ways that mimic how organs perform normally . . . and when they are diseased.

Linking different organ chips together—for example, intestine, liver, and kidney chips—can enable researchers to model human drug kinetics.

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<sup>2</sup> Harmony with Nature Resolution: A/RES/73/235 on Harmony with Nature.

<sup>3</sup> UNEP/EA.4/HLS.1

Culturing a human intestinal microbiome-on-a-chip can enable researchers to probe the complex interactions between microbiome, host, nutrients, and pathogens in a systematic way.

Researchers are using this technology to study the vaginal microbiome and therapeutics that could reduce the incidence of pre-term birth and risk of HIV infection. We're also supporting other "organ-on-a-chip" studies, including one that's using lymphoid organoids to understand vaccine responses.

This technology has the potential to shave years off the time it takes to evaluate the safety and efficacy of new drugs, vaccines, and other therapeutics—and save hundreds of millions of dollars associated with research and clinical trials."

Despite many decades of research, much of which has focused on studies in animals, people, especially those in the poorest parts of the world, continue to suffer from diseases and illnesses for which there are no cures or treatments. Insights provided by these animal studies do not often translate to humans, explaining the very high failure rate for new medicines when evaluated in human clinical trials. Drugs that enter into clinical trials have only a one in ten chance of getting to market with all the costs that that entails. Research focusing on humans is necessary to gain a better understanding of human disease and to develop safe and effective drug treatments for people.

A global roadmap to transition to NAMs would indeed accelerate change and transformation and move Agenda 2030 inexorably forward.