



12 March 2021

## World Federation for Animals Statement on the United Nations Environment Assembly Input to the High Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development.

**We are extremely disappointed to see that all mention of animals has been removed in the most recent draft of the input to the High Level Political Forum. We wonder why this has been removed, given the scientific basis for the linkage between our human and planetary health and animal health. We are not being infected with new diseases by the environment at large. We are being infected by our interactions with *animals*, and it is the changes we have made to the environment and our commoditization of animals that have increased the frequency and risk of these interactions.**

This is not controversial, and UNEP has made this case clearly in its report [Preventing the Next Pandemic](#), which states:

***Pandemics such as the COVID-19 outbreak are a predictable and predicted outcome of how people source and grow food, trade and consume animals, and alter environments.***

It is also made clear in UNEP's report "[Working with the environment to protect people: Covid-19 Response](#)", which was used as a basis for the latest round of revisions to the input, that diseases are passed from animals to humans, and it is the alteration of the environment which encourages this form of disease emergence.

**And finally, animal health is recognized as one of the three components of One Health. One Health is not based on humans and the environment alone. While UNEP is an environmental organization, it is vital that UNEP and UNEA provide leadership in accurately defining One Health and recommendations on how to leverage One Health to reduce the risk of future pandemics. UNEP has already excelled at this through its reports. This commitment to these scientific recommendations and clarity must be carried through to political declarations--otherwise, the immense effort in researching, compiling and developing such reports is wasted.**

We are further disappointed by the removal of the reference to agricultural intensification in the Annex for SDG 2. Again, this was clearly defined in the *Preventing the Next Pandemic* report as a key driver of zoonoses, alongside increasing demand for animal protein and increasing use and exploitation of wildlife. At minimum, we recommend providing a footnote to *Preventing the Next Pandemic* following this text: "The immediate and underlying pressures of biodiversity loss and ecosystem degradation have been identified as some of the main drivers of zoonoses..."

In both this instance and the removal of reference to animals, we are gravely concerned that if clear problem identification, as illuminated by science and relevant reports, is not possible in political documents, then driving progress on solutions to these problems will remain out of reach and we will ultimately meet only failure in our efforts to *build forward better*.

**We have experienced the risks in neglecting science before, such as in our struggle to prevent climate change, which delayed us decades in taking concrete and effective action. Let's not repeat this mistake again! It is a calculated choice of Member States if they want to avoid the next pandemics or simply prepare for the next one. UNEP, together with FAO, WHO, and OIE, should show leadership in this emerging issue--not by ignoring and deleting.**