



World Federation for Animals Comments on the 2023 Political Declaration

The World Federation for Animals (WFA), on behalf of its 52 member organizations, welcomes the opportunity to submit comments on the Political Declaration.

This year's Political Declaration, marking the halfway point of the Sustainable Development Agenda, is a critical moment to re-energize global commitment to achieve the Agenda. The Declaration should focus on igniting transformational change, generating collaboration and identifying opportunities to maximize and accelerate impact.

Even before COVID-19, the world was not on track to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). A business-as-usual approach has failed to deliver significant, sustainable progress toward the SDGs. Incremental changes and technological fixes cannot achieve the groundbreaking change that must occur to achieve them and secure a livable future. Instead, **we need transformative actions that fundamentally change how we develop and implement solutions to the multiple and interlinked crises we currently face.**

While a portion of the Zero Draft is dedicated to "Transformative actions for the SDGs", this portion lists only a limited number of actions that broadly encourage implementation of existing frameworks and actions rather than recommending innovative approaches and generally excludes actions to better protect and restore the environment. As one of the lead authors of the IPBES Assessment has said, **"Transformative change means doing things differently—not just a little more or less of something we're already doing."**¹

Further, **without a healthy and thriving environment, it will be impossible to achieve the SDGs**, as a healthy environment is the foundation on which social and economic development is based. The Zero Draft, unfortunately, does not pay due attention to the environmental dimension, neither in the identification of challenges nor in recommendations for action.

Finally, we would draw attention to [UNEA Resolution 5/1](#) on the Animal welfare–environment–sustainable development nexus. This resolution acknowledges **"that animal welfare can contribute to addressing environmental challenges, promoting the One Health approach and achieving the Sustainable Development Goals"** and notes that "the health and welfare of animals, sustainable development and the environment are connected to human health and well-being." As such, we think it essential to highlight the role that animal welfare and the One Health approach can play in accelerating action on the SDGs.

Below we make specific recommendations to strengthen the Zero Draft and integrate transformative actions throughout the document.

¹ <https://www.ipbes.net/news/what-transformative-change-how-do-we-achieve-it>

For a review of relevant language from past declarations, *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development*, and the SDGs themselves, please see [Annex 1](#).

A. Protecting Wildlife and Other Living Species

Protecting wildlife and other living species, as well as ending poaching and trafficking of protected species, are recurring themes in the SDGs and previous years' declarations. With the passage of UNEA resolution 5/1 on the nexus between animal welfare, environment and sustainable development in 2022, we believe including this wording, recognizing humanity's responsibility to protect wildlife and other living species, in the Political Declaration is especially timely.

Suggested wording

Paragraph 36. h):

- We will take urgent action to halt and reverse biodiversity loss to put nature on a path to recovery for the benefit of people and planet, by conserving and sustainably using biodiversity[, **protecting wildlife and other living species, including by ending the poaching and trafficking of protected species and the unsustainable consumption of wildlife,**] and ensuring the fair and equitable sharing of benefits from the use of genetic resources, while providing the necessary means of implementation. We will follow up on the goals and targets of the KunmingMontreal Global Biodiversity Framework and aim to close the \$700 billion biodiversity finance gap.

Rationale

- The language "protecting wildlife and other living species" is referenced in *Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development* and the 2016 and 2021 Ministerial Declarations.
- The language "including by ending the poaching and trafficking of protected species and the unsustainable consumption of wildlife" is from the 2018 and 2021 Ministerial Declarations. Poaching and trafficking are also referenced in Targets 15.7 and 15C. For more information, see [Annex 1](#).

B. One Health

The One Health approach is a transformative framework which fosters cross-sectoral collaboration and provides a basis for capitalizing on synergies and minimizing trade-offs. One Health offers a frame and strategy to prevent pandemics and achieve equity, given it is science-driven and rooted in a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach that enables communities to participate in strategy development and thereby protect themselves.

Further, prevention of zoonotic spillover at source is more cost-efficient and strategic than relying on disease detection and response, as stated in the white paper presented by the One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) on 22. February 2023². The One Health approach can be promoted through

² <https://www.who.int/publications/m/item/prevention-of-zoonotic-spillover>

improved primary preventive measures, recognizing basic animal welfare practices as an element to reduce the risk of disease introduction, zoonotic spillover and the spread of zoonotic diseases. It is crucial to maintain momentum and support for the One Health approach as a transformative action in the Political Declaration at the mid-way point of the Sustainable Development Agenda, given the potential of this framework to deliver sustainable development.

Option 1

Suggested Wording

Paragraph 36. c bis)

- **[c bis) We will promote the One Health approach and other holistic approaches to strengthen synergies between the health of people, animals, plants and ecosystems. We emphasize the importance of the One Health and other holistic approaches that deliver multiple benefits to the health and well-being of people, animals, plants and ecosystems, that would further strengthen the capacity to address biodiversity loss, prevent, prepare for and respond to the emergence of diseases, including zoonotic infections and future pandemics, and combat antimicrobial resistance.]**

Rationale

- This text is taken directly from the 2022 Ministerial Declaration, and follows the 2021 Ministerial Declaration which acknowledged that “human, animal, plant and ecosystem health are interdependent”.
- The nature of the One Health approach makes it well-placed as a new addition to this listing of transformative actions for the SDGs.

Option 2

Suggested Wording

Paragraph 9

- We must strengthen international cooperation for the poorest and most vulnerable countries to help them recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, as well as from ongoing conflicts, inflation and the cost-of-living crisis and to build resilience to future shocks and climate risks. We commit to strengthening pandemic preparedness, prevention and response, **including through the One Health approach and other holistic approaches that deliver multiple benefits to the health and well-being of people, animals, plants and ecosystems, that would further strengthen the capacity to address biodiversity loss, prevent, prepare for and respond to the emergence of diseases, including zoonotic infections and future pandemics, and combat antimicrobial resistance.]**

Rationale

- This text is taken directly from the 2022 Ministerial Declaration.

Option 3

Suggested Wording

Paragraph 28

- We note that there has been positive progress in a limited number of areas. We recognize the efforts of countries and stakeholders at all levels since 2015 to realize the vision of the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals. We acknowledge that the COVID-19 pandemic produced valuable lessons in science, technology, and innovation and digital transformation for sustainable development[, **including through the increased recognition of the One Health approach and other holistic approaches that deliver multiple benefits to the health and well-being of people, animals, plants and ecosystems, and that would further strengthen the capacity to address biodiversity loss, prevent, prepare for and respond to the emergence of diseases, including zoonotic infections and future pandemics, and combat antimicrobial resistance.**]

Rationale

- This text is taken from the 2022 Ministerial Declaration and adjusted to make One Health an example of a transformative and science-based approach that became more broadly accepted and understood following the COVID-19 crisis.

C. Sustainable Food Systems

We appreciate the reference to “accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems and promote healthy nutrition, diets and consumption practices” and recommend keeping this paragraph largely intact, with the minor addition below.

Suggested wording

Paragraph 36. d)

- We will take integrated action at all levels to accelerate the transition to sustainable food systems and promote healthy nutrition, diets[, **and production**] and consumption practices, and to recover momentum and accelerate efforts to end hunger and all forms of malnutrition. We will address water scarcity and stress and drive transformation from a global water crisis to a water-secure world, ensuring the availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all.

Rationale

- According to the FAO, “Food systems (FS) encompass the entire range of actors and their interlinked value-adding activities involved in the **production**, aggregation, processing, distribution, consumption and disposal of food products that originate from agriculture, forestry or fisheries, and parts of the broader economic, societal and natural environments in which they are embedded.”³ A “Sustainable food system (SFS) is a food system that delivers

³ <https://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>

food security and nutrition for all in such a way that the economic, social and environmental bases to generate food security and nutrition for future generations are not compromised.”⁴

- Therefore, it is appropriate to also include both production and consumption practices when referring to transformation to sustainable food systems. This also better aligns with SDG 12.

D. Climate

We appreciate the recognition of climate impacts and the emphasis on delivering climate finance. We hope the declaration will reflect the urgency of the climate crisis and include a reference to the IPCC’s Sixth Assessment report. We note, in particular, the IPCC’s call for action across sectors, including the critical need to address emissions from the food system to meet the Paris Agreement goals.

Suggested Wording

Paragraph 36. g)

- **[We reaffirm that climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time, and we note with serious concern the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report, including the urgent need for emissions reductions in all sectors. We emphasize that mitigation of and adaptation to climate change represent an immediate and urgent priority.]** We urge developed country parties to fully deliver on the goal of 100 billion United States dollars urgently and through to 2025 and emphasize the importance of transparency in the implementation of their pledges. We welcome the outcomes of COP-27 held in Sharm El-Sheikh, including the decision on funding arrangements for responding to loss and damage associated with the adverse effects of climate change, including a focus on addressing loss and damage.

Rationale

- This wording is borrowed from the 2019 Political Declaration and the 2022 Ministerial Declaration (for more information, see [Annex 1](#)).

⁴ <https://www.fao.org/3/ca2079en/CA2079EN.pdf>

Annex 1: Reviewing previous language

Past declarations have shown more ambition toward our relationship with nature and animals. We encourage the consideration of the following elements of previous declarations and suggest strengthening the 2023 Declaration along these lines.

The [2019 Political Declaration](#) makes the following points:

- “We remain resolved, between now and 2030 ... to ensure the **lasting protection of the planet** and its natural resources.”
- “We also reaffirm that **climate change is one of the greatest challenges** of our time ... we emphasize in this regard that **mitigation of and adaptation to climate change represent an immediate and urgent priority.**”
- “We commit to achieving **a world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature**, to conserving and sustainably using our planet’s marine and terrestrial resources, including through sustainable consumption and production, to **reversing the trends of environmental degradation**, to promoting resilience, to reducing disaster risk, and to **halting ecosystem degradation and biodiversity loss.**”
- “Biodiversity loss, environmental degradation, discharge of plastic litter into the oceans, climate change and increasing disaster risk continue at rates that bring **potentially disastrous consequences for humanity.**”

The [2022 Ministerial Declaration](#) states:

- “**We will promote the One Health** approach and other holistic approaches to **strengthen synergies between the health of people, animals, plants and ecosystems.** We emphasize the importance of the One Health and other holistic approaches that **deliver multiple benefits to the health and well-being of people, animals, plants and ecosystems**, that would further strengthen the capacity to address biodiversity loss, prevent, prepare for and respond to the emergence of diseases, including zoonotic infections and future pandemics, and combat antimicrobial resistance.”
- “We reaffirm that **climate change is one of the greatest challenges of our time** and its adverse impacts undermine the ability of all countries to achieve sustainable development. We **note with serious concern the findings in the contribution of Working Group I, Working Group II and Working Group III to the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) Sixth Assessment Report**, including that climate and weather extremes and their adverse impacts on people and nature will continue to increase with every additional increment of rising temperatures. We urge the full implementation of existing global and national climate commitments from all public and private actors.”

The 2021 Ministerial Declaration states:

- “We call for **increased ambition and urgency of action to protect wildlife and other living species** and reversing the trends in environmental degradation through the restoration of ecosystems, halting biodiversity loss and deforestation, promoting sustainable forest management and combating desertification, drought and land degradation, combating sand and dust storms, sound management of chemicals and waste, and enhancing global support for efforts to **combat poaching and trafficking in protected species, including by ending the illegal trade in and unsustainable consumption of wildlife.**”
- “We recognize that **human, animal, plant and ecosystem health are interdependent**, and emphasize in that regard the need for an integrated approach that fosters cooperation between environmental conservation and the human, animal and plant health sectors in line with the 2030 Agenda and the Sustainable Development Goals, recognizing the need to build on and strengthen the existing cooperation among the World Health Organization, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, the World Organization for Animal Health and the United Nations Environment Programme, recalling United Nations Environmental Assembly resolution 3/4 14 and World Health Assembly resolution 74.7. 15 **We emphasize that biodiversity and health linkages should be addressed holistically to prevent and mitigate pandemics in the future.**”

The 2018 Ministerial Declaration states:

- “We recognize that climate change, habitat loss, invasive alien species, **overexploitation of natural resources**, desertification, illegal logging, land-use change, **illegal wildlife poaching**, pollution and urbanization are global drivers of biodiversity loss worldwide.”
- “We will improve monitoring and reporting, including use of information and communications technology and remote sensing **to tackle, in particular, illegal logging and wildlife trafficking, including poaching.**”

The 2016 Ministerial Declaration states:

- “Also emphasize our commitment to a **world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature and in which wildlife and other living species are protected;**”

Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development calls for:

- a world “in which **humanity lives in harmony with nature and in which wildlife and other living species are protected.**”

SDG 15

- *Target 15.7*
 - Take urgent action to **end poaching and trafficking of protected species of flora and fauna and address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products**
- *Indicator 15.7.1*
 - Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked
- *Target 15.c*
 - Enhance global support for efforts to **combat poaching and trafficking of protected species**, including by increasing the capacity of local communities to pursue sustainable livelihood opportunities
- *Indicator 15.c.1*
 - Proportion of traded wildlife that was poached or illicitly trafficked