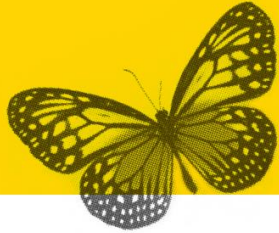


Outcomes of the Act #ForNature Forum

Healthy ecosystems for healthy people: Limiting the impact and future emergence of zoonotic diseases



08 June 2020



Joyce Msuya, Deputy Executive Director, UNEP



Ivonne Higuero - Secretary General, CITES



Cristina Romanelli - Co-chair, UN Interagency Biodiversity and Health, WHO



Margaret Kinnaird - Lead, Wildlife Unit, WWF-International



David Quammen - Author of "Spillover"



Maxi Louise - Director, Namibia Nature Conservancies Support Organization



Janice Cox - Director, World Animal Net



Berhe Gebreegziabher Tekola – Director, Animal Production and Health Division, FAO



Kate Jones - Professor of Ecology and Biodiversity, University College London



Susan Gardner, Director, Ecosystems Division, UNEP

Objective of the Townhall

The objective of the Townhall was to bring together key leaders and expert voices in order to provide an insight into the critical role played by ecosystem health in both understanding the origins of the COVID-19 crisis and successfully rebuilding a post-pandemic world. It aimed to explore actions recognizing nature's contribution to public health and to highlight how investment in science and nature could limit the impact and emergence of zoonotic diseases.

Outcomes of the Townhall

Zoonoses are not a new phenomenon, with increasing examples in the recent years, such as the Rift Valley fever, SARS, MERS or Ebola, to name a few. However, the COVID-19 crisis has been the most significant shock that global health systems have experienced in the last decades. Growing evidence suggests that outbreaks of zoonotic diseases may become more frequent as climate change and biodiversity loss develop. Antimicrobial resistance, air pollution and other environmental factors have the

potential to significantly amplify risks associated with zoonoses in the future.

Through UNEA-5 and the future post-2020 biodiversity framework, the international community has the opportunity to strengthen the integration of environmental dimensions into the 'One Health' approach, strongly linking human, animal and planetary health. In that regard, key intergovernmental organizations have already begun to align their programme of work, and governments have made strong commitments towards the protection of ecosystems, notably through the MEAs. However, panelists agreed that a key strategic focus should now be placed on the full implementation of those policies, at the international and national levels.

The recent debate on wildlife market bans was an important discussion item. It was highlighted that indiscriminatory bans could do more harm than good, as it could negatively impact community livelihoods and would be difficult to enforce. Measures such as the implementation of regulatory and sanitary standards, for example in livestock management, would play an important role.

All participants emphasized the crucial importance of transformational changes to rethink food systems and reverse deforestation, which should be at the heart of stimulus packages and outbreak preparedness plans (ref town hall 4). The creation of emergency funds to support communities affected by the loss of tourism income, the diversification of revenue streams and the promotion of investments for habitat protection and restoration were also discussed as key elements for a wildlife conservation recovery plan.

Watch the townhall [here](#).

Visit us at

<https://environmentassembly.unenvironment.org/act-for-nature-forum>

Key messages to the UN Environment Assembly:

- The next pandemic is tomorrow: are we ready?
- We must increase investment in truly interdisciplinary and cross-sectorial science, in order to strengthen our understanding of the links between climate change, environmental degradation and zoonoses.
- We need to build strong partnerships, breaking down silos between research and policy-making communities and fully integrating human, animal and planetary health dimensions.
- We must invest in recovery packages focusing on nature-based solutions, promoting preparedness to future outbreaks, and bolstering social, economic and ecological resilience.
- We need fundamental and integrated solutions where our different goals can be combined.
- There is a roadmap to environmental recovery; it is called MEAs. Each represent a brick in the road to recovery and sustainable development if politically prioritized.
- We should not focus on plans but on implementation of what we have.
- We will make an unforgivable mistake if we build back the same, thinking we address the environment later.
- UN Environment Assembly should mobilize other influential actors to «lean in» on the economic strategies, investment and support packages and infrastructure programmes that are coming. They are a huge opportunity towards sustainability.
- UN Environment Programme promotes a better future by demonstrating how humans can live in harmony with nature, and thereby reduce all kinds of risks, including of zoonotic diseases.



UN 
**environment
programme**



unep-sgb@un.org