

CBD Alliance Statement

Special Virtual Session for SBSTTA 24 and SBI 3 on Biodiversity, One Health and COVID-19 15-16 December 2020.

To achieve 'one health' for people and planet demands profound change in our behaviors on the basis of our common but differentiated responsibilities, we must return to the basic principles of the CBD and of Rio and actively enforce them.

In recent iterations of the GBF draft, little has changed as a result of what COVID-19 has taught us. The GBF must be fully revised to properly reflect the 3 pillars of the convention and the rights of those whose lives are most closely intertwined with the health of biodiversity: IPLCs, women, youth and small farmers. The volume of spending committed for the economic recovery from the COVID-19 that is potentially harmful to biodiversity outweighs the volume of spending beneficial to biodiversity. The GBF must change this situation through legally binding commitments, not voluntary pledges, solid accountability and compliance mechanisms, a strong rights-based approach and bear in mind One Health and One Welfare.

The pandemic is the result of our overall relationship with biodiversity, but also more specifically of the way food is produced: the intensive livestock sector is not only a leading driver of biodiversity loss, but also a significant breeding ground of zoonoses. It also is a key cause of climate change, and associated with a range of social, environmental, health and animal welfare problems. Now is not the time, to invest hundreds of millions in 11-story pig farms, as some development banks have done in post-pandemic stimulus packages. We echo the calls to ensure that such packages, as well as tax and subsidy architectures contribute to biodiversity, incentivize gender-responsive, socially and environmentally sustainable agricultural practices.

We note that in times of crisis such as these, technologies such as plans for fine-grained bio-digital surveillance, application of new biotechnologies or geoengineering, are accelerated and expanded with fresh investment and less critique and oversight. We call on the CBD to continue to play a leading role in regulating new and emerging technologies.

The third objective of the CBD and the Nagoya Protocol ensure that when biodiversity samples, including pathogens, are shared between countries and then used to generate profits, the providing countries receive some of the benefits that can result. Many developing countries have freely shared useful pathogens samples and sequence information then used to develop vaccines, diagnostics and other treatments. Yet some developed countries have locked up vaccine production and secured more COVID vaccine doses than they have citizens, while a biopharmaceutical firms reap huge profits. As a result, many developing countries have been unable to secure sufficient diagnostics, vaccines and treatments for their citizens.

Finally, we hope not to hear more rhetoric of positive actions that will be outweighed by far by harmful activities to Biodiversity. That simply does not make sense. Options are available we need to make them a reality now.