

WC20 DECLARATION

November 20, 2020

Prioritising nature, health and people in an effective and equitable COVID-19 recovery and response

“The pandemic is a reminder of the intimate and delicate relationship between people and planet. Any efforts to make our world safer are doomed to fail unless they address the critical interface between people and pathogens, and the existential threat of climate change, that is making our Earth less habitable”

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General, World Health Organization

We, the leaders of the undersigned conservation NGOs who together make up the Wildlife Conservation 20 (WC20), make the following recommendations to Global Leaders at the G20 Summit in response to the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic

Preamble:

1. Against the background of remorseless climate change and catastrophic levels of biodiversity loss, COVID-19 is a further symptom of an ailing planet. As our unsustainable consumption of natural resources and our destruction of the natural world continues, the G20 nations must show leadership and take urgent action to address the threat and root causes of zoonotic pandemics.
2. COVID-19 has killed 1.3 million people to date, affected millions more, and has harmed livelihoods on an unprecedented scale. The International Labour Organisation warned that in the first nine months of 2020 income earned by workers globally fell 10 percent, equivalent to a loss of over US\$3.5 trillion. Economic packages aimed at mitigating the impact of the pandemic are already projected to be as much as US\$26 trillion, dwarfing the cost of the environmental measures required to help prevent another pandemic, by several orders of magnitude.
3. Taking the correct steps to address the present imbalance with nature brings greater economic and financial benefit in the long run. Healthy economies and societies depend on healthy ecosystems, and recovery in a post-COVID-19 world cannot be at the expense of nature and climate if it is to be sustainable and balanced. A green and just recovery will also provide jobs and livelihoods, particularly for the poorest and most vulnerable who are hardest hit. Harmful financial incentives, which further undermine the viability of natural systems, need to be reduced and ultimately eliminated, and instead redirected towards nature-based solutions. G20 States should commit to generating the order of magnitude increase in global funding that is required, so as to protect nature and biodiversity and

prevent future pandemics, as well as securing the technical expertise and support required to ensure its effective and equitable distribution.

4. The exact source of COVID-19 remains uncertain but scientists agree it is another zoonotic spillover that occurred as a result of the increasing human-wildlife interface. The COVID-19 pandemic is a stark warning that our current relationship with nature is unsustainable and requires critical investment for the future health of ourselves and our planet. If that investment does not occur at the scale that is required, then further pandemics are likely, with the potential for similar or greater human and economic costs.
5. Seventy percent of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin, including SARS, HIV, and Ebola. Root causes are the encroachment into and destruction of the natural environment via practices such as agricultural expansion, industrial-scale farming, deforestation, and the unsustainable exploitation of natural resources, including wildlife farming and the wildlife trade. These bring humans, wildlife and livestock into close contact, increasing the risk of zoonotic pathogen spillovers.
6. Political and financial commitments to avert environmental crises that negatively impact people and our planet have yet to be translated into effective action. Government sectors need to be coordinated and engage wider society to ensure effective implementation of strategies that promote a realignment of our relationship with nature. There is an urgent need for partnerships and unified policy and strategy among institutions dealing in ecology and wildlife conservation, zoonotic diseases, animal and human health, food safety, trade, finance and relevant regulatory and enforcement agencies.
7. Signing up for new commitments is ineffectual if they remain 'yet to be implemented'. G20 member governments need to create the enabling framework for effective actions to deliver solutions on the ground, while monitoring and evaluating their impact, and recognising and championing success and deterring transgressions.
8. Now, as never before, all efforts must be taken, as stated below, to take strong action to overcome these threats by investing in natural ecosystems and biodiversity to prevent future pandemics, and by delivering evidence-led solutions to zoonotic risks.

We acknowledge:

- The role of multilateral agreements such as CBD, CITES, CMS, Ramsar Convention, UNTOC, UNCAC, and the UNESCO World Heritage Convention.
- The UN Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Climate Accord, existing provisions to safeguard human, animal and plant life or health as well as natural resources within instruments governing international trade such as WTO GATT, and other relevant international bodies such as FAO, OIE and WHO.
- The London Declaration on the Illegal Wildlife Trade signed by 65 governments in London in October 2018 and the preceding Kasane Statement (Botswana 2015) and Hanoi Statement (Vietnam 2016).
- The UN General Assembly 'tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife' resolutions in 2015, 2017 and 2019; as well as the resolution 'Preventing and combating corruption as it relates to crimes that have an impact on the environment', adopted at the 8th meeting of the Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption.

- The Leaders' Pledge for Nature signed by 78 countries in the run up to the 30 October 2020 UN Summit on Biodiversity that steps up global targets and encourages others to match their collective ambition for nature, climate and people.
- The One Health approach, addressed in the Berlin Principles 2019, to promote existing or new international arrangements to address the risk of zoonotic disease.
- The adoption by the G20 in 2017 of the 'High Level Principles on Combating Corruption Related to Illegal Trade in Wildlife and Wildlife Products'.
- The IPBES report 'Escaping the Era of Pandemics', released on 29 October 2020.

We recommend:

R1: Strengthening Policy and Implementation

G20 States need to resource and implement already existing international and domestic legislation, as well as new legislation and WC20-recommended measures, to protect our planet's biodiversity, environments and ecosystems. This will help re-establish a healthier link between people and nature, and ensure the legal, sustainable and traceable use of natural resources so that this does not threaten human or animal health.

To include:

1. Adopting the 'One Health' approach recommended by the World Health Organization and other multilateral organisations, which includes cross-sectoral safeguards for people, animals and ecosystems in order to mitigate zoonotic outbreaks. This would include strengthening multidisciplinary and cross-sectoral approaches to quantify, prioritise and mitigate zoonotic spillover risk, especially for commercial trade and markets in wild animal species and in high risk spots such as farming areas near tropical forests, commercial wildlife captive farming and industrial livestock operations.
2. Uniting to ensure that the post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework, as agreed under the Convention on Biological Diversity, includes targets and indicators in support of the recommendations outlined in this document, in particular those that ensure any trade and use of wildlife is legal, sustainable, safe, and does not include trade in threatened species nor pose a zoonotic risk to humans or to the survival of threatened species in the wild, while also incorporating considerations safeguarding human and animal health and wellbeing.
3. Complying with the following UN resolutions: a) 'Preventing and combating corruption as it relates to crimes that have an impact on the environment', adopted at the 8th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Corruption; b) the UN General Assembly 'tackling illicit trafficking in wildlife' series of resolutions commencing in 2015; and c) 'Preventing and combating crimes that affect the environment falling within the scope of the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime', adopted at the 10th Conference of the Parties to the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime in October 2020.
4. Developing and implementing effective official governmental licensing, inspection and auditing systems as appropriate for wildlife, wildlife parts and wildlife derivatives in trade to ensure transparency and effective control, including in government stockpiles, as well as for

safe veterinary-managed disposal when required, in accordance with agreed international protocols.

5. For species where commercial trade (domestic and international) is allowed, enact the implementing and updating of international and national legislation and regulations to ensure it is sustainable, traceable and safe – or, as appropriate and following consultation, closed down on the occasion where it poses a likely, evidence-based risk of zoonotic transmission to people or other animals or threatens the survival of the species in the wild; while ensuring that science-based solutions based on biological, public and animal health criteria, and criteria to protect biodiversity and human and animal health, are adopted to regulate trade in species.
6. Adopting a fourth Protocol under the UN Convention against Transnational Organized Crime to enshrine a commitment to prevent and combat wildlife crime (plants and animals) as well as zoonotic spillovers and foster cooperation between source and demand countries.

R2. Enforcing Laws and Enhancing Regulatory Measures

G20 States need to scale up financial and technical support for law enforcement in key wildlife source States, transit hubs and destination countries/territories and adopt a collaborative and multi-organisational approach. This will help create an effective deterrent to wildlife crime.

To include:

1. Monitoring and stringently regulating the currently legal wildlife trade, including that related to ranching and captive breeding of wild animals, to ensure that any trade that is allowed does not pose a risk to human or animal health or the survival of the species in the wild, is carried out legally and sustainably, and is underpinned by traceability or certification, as appropriate, that follows scientifically-agreed guidelines on human and animal health and well-being, and biodiversity protection.
2. Undertaking intelligence-led investigations to target wildlife criminals operating at intermediary and higher levels within international organised criminal organisations, coordinated by well-resourced, multi-agency, multi-disciplinary enforcement task forces at national, regional and global levels.
3. Increasing the development and application of new technologies to tighten law enforcement – including at ports and borders – to achieve shared objectives, effective information sharing and close collaboration so as to meet conservation and other objectives and to help protect human and animal health and well-being.
4. Delivering increased training, equipment and technological solutions to skilled wildlife rangers, and ensuring compliance with required approved standards of practice and welfare.
5. Facilitating judicial training and processes to result in effective prosecutions and proportionally-deterrent sentencing for international wildlife trafficking, with further additional punishments introduced where appropriate, including financial and travel restrictions and asset forfeiture, with an additional aim of converting these criminal assets into conservation restitution funds that help finance wildlife and nature recovery.

6. Addressing international wildlife trade-related crimes, including cybercrime and money laundering, through enforcement, training, private sector partnerships and cross-regional operations.

R3: Safeguarding Natural Ecosystems

G20 States need to work with all relevant stakeholders and experts to secure adequate finances and technical expertise, and government support, for the effective protection and management of natural ecosystems and wildlife so that they are valued and supported, and become generators of economic wealth. This will help address the present funding imbalance which, according to research by the European Investment Bank, indicates that global resources invested in nature recovery and biodiversity need to be increased eight-fold if natural ecosystems and wildlife are to be adequately supported and allowed to flourish.

To include:

1. Champion and implement the call to scale up protection and conservation of natural ecosystems so that 30 percent of the world's terrestrial, freshwater, coastal and ocean ecosystems are effectively conserved by 2030 through protected areas or other effective area-based conservation measures, focusing on key areas for biodiversity and ecosystem services and recognising the contribution by Indigenous Peoples and local communities. This requires, for example, increasing investment and capacity in the existing protected area network to ensure it is effectively conserved; the establishment of additional community conservancies; the creation of corridors for animal movement; and supporting buffer zones around key natural habitats.
2. Intensifying international cooperation and national and international investment in the conservation of high biodiversity and high integrity ecosystems, with due application of stringent environmental and social safeguards, and acting together to enforce policies to end subsidies and investments harmful to conservation that result in biodiversity loss and instead redirect them towards nature-based solutions that deliver vital ecosystem services.
3. Ending the deforestation, degradation and fragmentation of primary/intact forests, including through the better use of forest monitoring and payments for ecosystem services.
4. Addressing the loss of revenue experienced by those who play a key role in securing conservation areas – including Indigenous Peoples and local communities – as a result of COVID-19 such as by exploring new economic benchmarks, including equitable revenue sharing and through supporting innovative sustainable funding mechanisms such as those described in the UNDP Biodiversity Financing Initiative.
5. While recognising and respecting all sovereignty issues, supporting the expansion of partnerships with the private sector, thereby helping secure further resources and safeguards to implement programmes that protect ecosystems and improve management capacity of protected areas and natural landscapes, whilst also helping to eliminate investments that harm biodiversity.

6. Enabling rewilding programmes and restoring degraded land and seas; and encouraging environmental research-led, landscape-level territorial planning for prioritising the adoption of 'smart green' infrastructure and development projects that secure core wilderness areas.

R4: Supporting Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities (IPLCs)

G20 States need to respect the rights, and enhance the livelihoods and well-being of IPLCs living within and/or depending on natural ecosystems so as to improve human wellbeing, alleviate human-wildlife coexistence pressures, and reduce and halt the loss of natural habitat and the associated wildlife they hold. This will help enable IPLCs living within or depending on natural ecosystems to define and participate in wildlife guardianship, monitoring and enforcement and promote wellbeing alongside sustainable livelihood opportunities and economic development, as well as reducing the loss of natural habitat and the associated wildlife they hold.

To include:

1. Developing and implementing the enabling environment and rights-based policies to strengthen wildlife and rural economies to mitigate human-wildlife conflict and increase IPLCs' capacity to pursue sustainable livelihoods that support their health, food security and safety.
2. Funding IPLCs through payments to them for the protection and enhancement of ecosystem services and biodiversity in a manner that they require, and utilising their traditional knowledge, in helping deliver appropriate wildlife protection programmes.
3. Evaluating and supporting appropriate sustainable livelihood, alternative incomes and food alternatives for local communities that depend on wild meat for subsistence, in order to reduce the risk to human health and vulnerable wildlife populations and to address food security.
4. Enabling best practices for human-wildlife coexistence in a manner that adopts approaches in accordance with the rights, role and needs of IPLCs; while helping increase the capacity of local communities to define and participate in conservation governance, wildlife monitoring and guardianship, and collaborative enforcement.
5. Mandating investments targeting wildlife-dependent communities to monitor the health of humans and animals to prevent and identify potential incidences of zoonotic spillover while fully engaging IPLCs in such efforts.
6. Securing, as appropriate, legal recognition of Indigenous Peoples' rights including protection of land tenure and working to uphold local rights to use and benefit equitably from natural resources.

R5: Reducing Demand, including Changing Consumer Behaviour

The G20 States need to work with government authorities, stakeholders, civil society and major influencers to inform the public about reducing the risks of zoonotic spillovers, as well as working to

raise public awareness about and reduce demand for illegally and/or unsustainably exploited wildlife and their products.

To include:

1. Supporting and boosting public education and awareness campaigns and social marketing to change consumer behaviour in the use and purchase of harmful, illegal, unsustainable or unsafe wildlife or wildlife products used in certain luxury goods, status symbols and medicines.
2. Phasing out the use of any such products as cited in the point above in public procurement.
3. Informing the public and governments of the urgency of avoiding future zoonotic transfers, and the importance of maintaining natural forests, wildlife and their biodiversity for our health.
4. Raising awareness within their States of the legal penalties for purchasing illegal products while ensuring that any trade is well regulated, legal, sustainable, traceable and safe.
5. Enabling technical and financial support for researchers, both in source and demand countries, to better understand the drivers, trends and dynamics of consumer behaviour, in order to influence demand reduction.

The G20 needs to act now to address our present imbalance with the natural world. Habitats have to be protected for wildlife. The true value of natural capital and ecosystem services must be recognised and accounted for. The illegal wildlife trade must be stopped, and any other commercial trade in wildlife that poses a threat to biodiversity or to human health, including future pandemics, must be stringently regulated or ended.

COVID-19 has been a wake up call to everyone on this planet. Now is the time to value and invest in nature to prevent future pandemics by developing sustainable nature-based economic stimulus packages that embrace a One Health approach and address long-term planetary health, food security, poverty alleviation, climate change and biodiversity loss, and work towards achieving the UN's Sustainable Development Goals.

That is why the WC20 calls on the G20 nations to implement greater investment in nature. Doing so will not only bring environmental benefits but will generate jobs, provide sustainable economic development opportunities and help address the climate emergency. Otherwise, the natural world, on which we all rely, will not be safeguarded for the long-term well-being and security of current and future human generations, and for all life on earth.

The undersigned therefore urge for the immediate adoption of our Recommendations.

Signed by:

African Parks

African Wildlife Foundation

BirdLife International

Born Free Foundation

Conservation International

Education for Nature Vietnam

Global Initiative to

End Wildlife Crime

Environmental Investigation Agency

Fauna & Flora International

Frankfurt Zoological Society

Freeland

Jane Goodall Institute

Paradise Foundation International

Space for Giants

The Nature Conservancy

TRAFFIC

WildAid

Wildlife Conservation Society

WWF

ZSL (Zoological Society of London)

Dated: 20 November 2020