

Statement from DIVERSITAS at CBD COP 12 for Item 16.3 on Biodiversity and Human Health

Thank you Madam Chair,

This is a statement on behalf of DIVERSITAS, the international programme of biodiversity science under the auspices of ICSU and UNESCO, and EcoHealth Alliance.

DIVERSITAS and EcoHealth Alliance strongly welcome the activities developed by the CBD on the biodiversity and health interlinkages toward the achievement of co-benefits for biodiversity and health. We also welcome that these efforts have jointly been made by CBD and WHO.

The opportunities to benefit from forming biodiversity and health synergies extend beyond the mainstreaming of biodiversity in policy agendas. Biodiversity and health collaboration has also a positive impact on public health and human population well-being as it has been mentioned several times today in the context of the discussions on the post-2015 framework on sustainable development.

Addressing from a joint health and biodiversity perspective disease outbreaks allow prevention or early detection, and efficient response to disease risks. As an example, the devastating Ebola outbreak in West Africa:

- 1) Highlights the urgent need to address disease risks more proactively, and
- 2) Recognizes that disease threats are not only relevant to human health, but also to other species and to the functioning of ecosystems as a whole.

While the origin of this specific outbreak has not yet been confirmed, past Ebola outbreaks in humans as well as the concurrent outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo beginning in August 2014, have been linked to the hunting, handling or consumption of infected wild animals. Ebola virus has also caused severe declines in Chimpanzees and the critically endangered wild Lowland Gorilla troops. Die-offs in Great Apes have occurred prior to human outbreaks, and thus monitoring Ebola virus in Great Ape populations may provide sentinel benefits for detecting risks to both human and animal health. Ebola is one example of *many* that demonstrate the connections between human, animal health, and the environment.

This example also shows the importance of adopting an ecosystem or One Health approach to understand and manage human health issues. To support the work of the Parties, we will propose – in writing – the definition of the One Health approach.

Other examples of the use of the One Health approach from the work of DIVERSITAS and EcoHealth Alliance, can be found in the State of Knowledge Review on Biodiversity and Human Health, which the advanced draft was released today at a lunch time side event. DIVERSITAS and EcoHealth Alliance have been honored to participate in this scientific and technological work. We see this work not as an end point but rather as a starting one for further CBD-WHO activities, especially in the context of the work on the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.

In that context, DIVERSITAS and EcoHealth Alliance would like to support:

- 1) Proposal from Brazil on the inclusion of the text from UNEP/CBD/COP/12/16 as important follow up activities;
- 2) Proposal from Guinea to establish an expert working group - to serve as a technical resource to the CBD and WHO - as one way to pursue the CBD-WHO collaborative work on biodiversity and human health. The Group would provide knowledge to the Parties of the CBD on emerging topics related to biodiversity and health, such as the Ebola crisis, and of potential management solutions based on an ecosystem approach. This would enable a formal mechanism for relevant health and conservation communities, including scientific partners such as DIVERSITAS, EcoHealth Alliance, or the IUCN Species Survival Commission Wildlife Health Specialist Group, among many other collaborating organizations, to provide scientific and technical input to assist CBD Parties in implementing practices that promote both biodiversity and health.

Finally regarding, document UNEP/CBD/COP/12/16, DIVERSITAS would like to see one addition in paragraph 5) (a) (i), which was agreed at SBSTTA 18 and which is not reflected in the document. Note that if this paragraph is included in the draft decisions of COP12 as proposed by Brazil, this modification also needs to be reflected in these draft decisions.

"To continue efforts under the joint work programme between the Secretariat and the World Health Organization; and to further strengthen collaboration with other relevant organizations, in particular with the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations and Bioversity International, **DIVERSITAS**, as well as with initiatives, such as the Biodiversity and Community Health Initiative, as appropriate, to foster the implementation of the Strategic Plan for Biodiversity 2011-2020 and achievement of the Aichi Biodiversity Targets, in particular Target 14 ; and"

Definition of the One Health approach

The One Health approach looks at the connections between the health of humans, other species and ecosystems to more fully understand the processes and impacts related to disease and health. Working through a One Health approach can identify cost-effective solutions that enable earlier detection, and ideally prevention, of human, animal and plant health risks while also benefitting biodiversity. At the same time, it can be used to find balance and mitigate risks where health and biodiversity priorities and actions may not be in agreement. Its purpose is not to influence trade or increase financial implications, but rather is a flexible framework that emphasizes collaboration and synergies for addressing health and conservation challenges to maximize benefits of limited resources.

Thank you Madam Chair.