



**AU-IBAR's Welcoming Remarks at the African Union Diplomatic Corps Meeting on the
Animal Resolution at the United Nation Environment Assembly (UNEA)**

23rd November 2021

- H.E Beyene Russom, Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the State of Eritrea;
- H.E Damptey B. Asare, Ghana High Commissioner to Kenya.
- Amb. Nehemiah Rotich, Board Member of the Africa Network for Animal Welfare (ANAW) Board and the World Federation for Animals Representatives of the African Diplomatic Corps to UNEP
- Animal Welfare Experts from various organizations
- All Protocols observed
- Distinguished participants
- Ladies and Gentlemen

1. I bring you warm greetings from the Chairperson of the African Union Commission (AUC) His Excellency Moussa Faki Mahamat and the Commissioner of Agriculture, Rural Development, Blue Economy and Sustainable Environment, H.E Ambassador Josefa Sacko. I am greatly honoured to be with you today and to deliver this welcoming remarks during this High Level Meeting of African Diplomatic Corps, to consolidate our efforts in seeking the adoption of a new resolution on the close interlinkages that exist between improving animal welfare, protecting the environment and socio-economic development, at the upcoming session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) in February 2022. Indeed the adoption of the resolution will be a major milestone in sustainable animal resources development in Africa, in pursuant of the aspirations of Agenda 2063 and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. I take this opportunity to applaud the organizers, led by His Excellency Honourable Damptey

Bediako Asare, the High Commissioner for Ghana to Kenya, and the African Union InterAfrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) for convening this important meeting.

2. Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen

As you may be aware, AU-IBAR is the specialized technical institutions of the African Union Commission (AUC) that supports and coordinate the development and utilization of the animal resources (livestock, fisheries and wildlife) as a resource for human wellbeing in the MSs and to contribute to economic development.

In agriculture, animals are central to production systems and their welfare is a key challenge in the delicate balance between their welfare and the socioeconomic demands. There is therefore an increasing recognition, particularly in subsistence and small scale production systems typical of the developing world, of the link between animal welfare, production and productivity, incomes and livelihoods. Concern for animal welfare is therefore intrinsically a concern for human wellbeing and animal productivity and entails an inclusive approach within the animal resource sector and sustainable development.

3. **Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen**, given the strong interlinkages between Animals, Humans and environment, inappropriate management and utilisation of animal resources can negatively affect their productivity, biodiversity and climate change mitigation as well as result in the introduction and spread of diseases, which can affect public health, productivity, and ultimately livelihoods and economic development.
4. In recent years, animal welfare has also become an issue of increasing concern globally and indeed in Africa. At the same time, compliance with animal welfare standards is more and more often included in livestock trade agreements.
5. Ladies and Gentlemen, AU-IBAR, in recognition of the role of animal welfare in the sustainable animal resources industry and indeed the development of this continent, spearheaded the development of an Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa [AWSA]. The

Strategy was endorsed by the African Union Heads of States and Government in January 2018. The vision of the Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa is ***an Africa where animals are treated as sentient beings and good Animal Welfare practices contribute significantly to human well-being, livelihoods, poverty reduction and economic growth***. The strategy is informed by animal welfare international standards of the World Organization for Animal Health. The development and implementation of the strategy carefully ensures that the context of the AWSA aligns to the African context. Briefly, the African context refers to the socio-cultural, socio-economic and general vulnerabilities of the continent, such as poor infrastructural capacities, food and nutrition security, food safety, health, research, education and political sectors.

6. **Your Excellences, Ladies and Gentlemen,** The Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa aims to give strategic direction and guidelines for effective improvement of Animal Welfare across Africa. The AWSA will contribute to building capacities and mainstreaming animal welfare in policies, strategies, legislations and programmes in Member States and Regional Economic Communities (RECs) as well serving as a collaborative framework to drive the animal welfare agenda on the continent. Its effective implementation will enhance the implementation of Animal Welfare standards across Africa, contribute to the achievement of the priorities of Agenda 2063, The CAADP/Malabo commitments, the Livestock Development Strategy for Africa (LIDES) 2015-2035 as well as the Animal Health Strategy for Africa (AHS) 2019-2035.
7. AU-IBAR remains committed to actively promote the improvement of animal welfare and we consider the adoption of the proposed UNEA resolution as well as the ongoing effort to seek the adoption of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW) by the UN General Assembly as essential and key elements of our joint effort to secure the health, growth and prosperity of the animal resources sector development in Africa.
8. To African Union Member States in this meeting, it is becoming increasingly clear that the absence of a global commitment to consider and promote the benefits of animal welfare for animal resource productivity, human health, biodiversity and climate

change mitigation has had, and will continue to have, devastating consequences on our collective wellbeing and prosperity and it is time to take action now.

9. Ladies and Gentlemen, the impact of the relationship between man and nature in one country affects what happens in another one. Global trends in climate change and pandemic diseases are classic evidence that this is a fact. Scientific evidence informs us that the devastating COVID 19 Pandemic is an outcome of the misuse of animals and the natural ecosystems. It is crucial that to prevent the recurrence of such a catastrophe in future, corrective measures are urgently taken, given that the WHO reports that about 60% of known human infections are zoonoses, about 71% of which originate from wildlife, and that about 75% of Emerging Infectious Diseases are of wild animal origin.
10. Poor animal welfare practices and the destruction of biodiversity must stop, for the occurrence of the majority of zoonotic diseases from domestic and wild animals to reduce. It is therefore clear to us that this meeting is an initiative in the right direction, towards consensus building for the protection of animals and environment
11. To ensure that animal welfare in Africa is widely understood and enforced, AU-IBAR led partners in the establishment of an inclusive approach, in a continent comprised of countries with sharply diverse geotopographical, political and economic profiles. AU-IBAR spearheaded the establishment of a strategic alliance on Animal welfare in Africa, the African Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW). APAW is an AU-IBAR led continental multi-stakeholder's platform bringing together veterinary authorities, authorities in livestock production and development, development and technical partners, relevant Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) and CSOs and Research and training establishments. I am glad to observe that through the APAW, the AU's voting power of its 54 MS in the UN; followed by Asia with 48, Europe with 44 and the Americas with 35 has the potential to influence decision-making on matters of global concerns, such as animal welfare.

12. AU-IBAR has been closely involved in the preparation of and drafting of the resolution before us. I also want to express sincere thanks and appreciation to the governments of Ghana, Burkina Faso, Democratic Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Senegal and South Sudan for the leadership role that they have taken on in preparing and sponsoring the proposed resolution.

13. Your Excellences, Representatives from African Diplomatic Corps

I am glad to mention that given the anticipated benefits from the proposed Resolution, we are confident that the rest of the AU MS will support this noble initiative. Furthermore, from the global perspective of the benefits from good animal welfare, I am hopeful that the rest of the global community will support this noble call.

14. **Ladies and Gentlemen**, in closing, I wish to underscore that the link between animals, planet and people calls for a One-Health/One-Welfare approach.

15. **I also call upon** all the AU MS to collectively champion this animal welfare resolution at UNEA to bring to the global discussion and recognition of the interlinkages between improving animal welfare, environmental sustainability and socio-economic development.

16. I trust that these remarks, have provided some insights as to the important role of animal and environmental welfare to the wellbeing of humanity, especially in Africa, which is uniquely vulnerable due to its weak technological and financial coping mechanisms. My call for action is therefore to call upon you to strategize on how you can use your prowess in diplomacy, to mobilize the 55 AU MS and your global networks to join hands to rally UNEA to adopt the proposed **resolution on Animal Welfare-Environment-Sustainable Development Nexus**. That way, **Ladies and Gentlemen**, you will have supported the AUC's efforts to promote Africa's posterity and that of the global community, as envisaged in the SDGs and the African Agenda 2063.

17. As I conclude I look forward to continued partnership with Animal Welfare actors in the continent in our pursuit of our goal to improve animal welfare in all our Member States and to the adoption of the resolution by UNEA in February 2022.

18. And with these remarks, I join Ambassador Nehemiah Rotich, of the Board of Directors for ANAW and WFA, to warmly welcome you to this meeting.

May God Bless You All!

May God bless Africa