

Africa Animal Welfare Conference 2020

Overview and Objectives

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Dear conference delegates,

Background overview

In Africa, animals are an essential livelihood support resource. They are deeply embedded in the overall socio-economic structure of the communities. In recent times though, there are concerns that, with rapid industrialization and the changing nature of African economies, animal welfare is getting increasingly compromised.

Animal welfare is about the manner in which animals cope with their living conditions. The goal of animal welfare is to eliminate suffering of animals. The moral question here is not whether animals can suffer, but: should animals suffer? The Conference is based on the belief that animals should not suffer from hunger and thirst; or suffer from pain, injury and disease; or suffer from lack of expressing natural behavior; or suffer from discomfort; or suffer from fear and distress; or even suffer from co-existing with people.

Animal Welfare, as a concept is rapidly gaining interest in Africa. The time has come to define Animal Welfare in terms of development, food security and health related issues. Therefore, the attainment of desirable animal welfare practices in Africa can be best achieved through the involvement and participation of the people of Africa, and especially the policy makers and practitioners in various sectors related directly or indirectly to the animal resource sector.

Vision: The Conference vision is to become the premier platform for animal welfare stakeholders in Africa to dialogue and address circumstances and developments in animal welfare.

Mission: The Conference has a mission to bring together animal welfare stakeholders to deliberate on critical issues affecting animals, their value and their contribution to socio-economic development in Africa.

Goal: The overall goal of the conference is to instigate policy development, review and planning for realizing animal welfare best practices.

This Conference is held annually and hosted in any African country. The activities of each year are guided by an agreed theme and objectives, all leading to the Conference goal.

The Africa Animal Welfare Conference (AAWC), has steadily emerged as a major forum for practitioners and stakeholders in animal welfare to engage and build capacity in this sector, and furthermore, to relate the sector to relevant actors in development. From the first Conference held in Nairobi, Kenya in 2017 to the third Conference in Addis Ababa, Ethiopia in 2019, the conference has evolved as a premier platform for highlighting key concerns in animal welfare,

wildlife and environmental conservation, human health and matters of sustainable development in Africa.

Over this period, some key discussions have emerged from the conference sessions. They include:

- The need to promote sustainable production and consumption of food in the African continent
- The recognition that Animal Welfare is a crucial matter that calls for mainstreaming in development across Africa.
- The purpose for United Nations Environment (UNEP) to embrace animal welfare as a substantive issue that merits discussion at the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA) platforms.
- The need for concerted efforts to pursue partnerships with humanitarian agencies so as to improve Animal Welfare, and especially Animals in Disaster situations because they are often neglected

The Conference offers a vibrant platform for discussion on Animal Welfare issues against the backdrop of Human Health and the Environment, giving a fresh outlook to the One Health concept with a clear definition of the link between human health, animals and the environment.

This 4th Africa Animal Welfare Conference, themed: *Animal Welfare, Wildlife and Environmental Conservation for Sustainable Development in Africa: Enhancing Nature-Based Solutions*, arise from the growing need to promote natural solutions, in our pursuits for food production and other developments to suit our needs in Africa in order help protect the integrity of our soils, water bodies and environment. There is also need to develop and promote nature-based solutions to ensure enhanced animal welfare, human health, environmental conservation, and development.

This 4th conference therefore focus on the role of animals and their relationship to conservation, health, livelihoods, and sustainable development, and looking at what solutions are offered by nature to mitigate the current threats to the ecosystem in general.

Conference Objectives

1. To highlight the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic and potential zoonoses pandemics on human health, animal welfare, wildlife and environmental conservation and their threat to attainment of sustainable development.
2. To demonstrate the progress in harnessing the link between animal welfare, wildlife and environmental conservation, human and animal health and sustainable development in Africa.
3. To create a focused and well-informed caucus of animal welfare practitioners and stakeholders in Africa.
4. To explore the role of using natural solutions for achieving the desires for food security and tackling the animal welfare-based challenges of development in Africa.

5. To illustrate progress towards mainstreaming Animal Welfare in the United Nations and Member States across Africa and championing the gains realized through the African Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW).
6. To underscore the role of governments, individuals, organizations, and communities in achieving responsible use of animals, improving animal welfare, and supporting environmental conservation in Africa.

Approaches

The conference will employ various approaches to achieve its objectives. These include:

1. Moderated panel sessions with the opportunity for questions and answers to identify and develop interventions and resolutions on how to mitigate animal welfare and environmental challenges posed by the development process in Africa.
2. Presentations and discussion sessions of case studies on the food security situation across Africa, the role of animals in this, the increased commercialization of agriculture and the impact of this on the environment and animal welfare.
3. Presentations and discussions of research findings, case studies on the interaction of animal welfare, environmental conservation, and sustainable development.
4. Presentations and discussion sessions of case studies on the use of natural solutions to mitigate food security, environmental degradation, and developmental challenges
5. Presentations and discussions, and experiential sessions on the link between animal welfare, environmental degradation, and disease pandemics (COVID-19).

The deliberations at the Conference will attempt to, among others, respond to the following broad questions:

1. What are the implications of the COVID-19 pandemic on Africa's development agenda?
2. To what extent will it be practical to use natural solutions in attending to Africa's food demands and development agenda?
3. To what extent are animal keeping communities involved in promoting animal welfare and what more can be done to raise their participation in large scale development across Africa?
4. What is the current status and impact of commercial agriculture in Africa's food production system and is this likely to prevail for the foreseeable future?
5. Are natural solutions currently applicable in addressing animal welfare, environmental and food security concerns in Africa? If so, to what extent and what are the results and probable avenues for upscaling this uptake?

Expected Outcomes

We hope that at the conclusion of this conference, there will be:

1. Increased awareness on the drivers and consequences of global pandemics and their link to animal welfare and environmental conservation.

2. More interest for animal welfare across Africa demonstrated through involvement of government representatives, civil society, and broad section of stakeholders in the Conference, and further interest and involvement in Animal Welfare and biodiversity conservation by governments in Africa through policy development and implementation.
3. A Conference report with resolutions and a policy brief to inform and guide governments and other development actors on further considerations for Animal Welfare in developing development strategies in Africa.
4. A commentary on the viability of animal welfare-related natural solutions to food security, environmental conservation, and development challenges in Africa.
5. Renewed support for animal welfare across Africa demonstrated through involvement of government representatives, civil society and broad section of stakeholders in the AAW Conference, regional community forums, UN forums and intergovernmental meetings leading to a renewed commitment to pursue the implementation of the Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa
6. Increased sensitization on the contribution of animals and Animal Welfare and environmental conservation in Africa to sustainable development and food security.
7. Better understanding by the government representatives, regional community, and intergovernmental bodies of the greater link between the Animal Welfare, biodiversity conservation and human health- COVID-19 being a strong example.

Thank you.