

Remarks

by David Ombisi

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at the opening of the 9th Africa Animal Welfare Conference

***Distinguished guests,
Ladies and gentlemen,***

I would like to start by thanking all the delegates attending this 9th Africa Animal Welfare Conference both in-person and online. On behalf of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), it is a pleasure and privilege to partner with the co-hosting organizations in organizing these Conferences since 2017. I wish to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Cameroon for agreeing to host this year's Conference.

On behalf of UNEP, I am pleased to address this 9th Africa Animal Welfare Conference which marks another step in the journey towards the development and integration of animal welfare and environmental sustainability in Africa. Through collaboration, strategic partnerships and knowledge sharing, this Animal Welfare Conference continues to inspire action and create positive change that benefit our people, animals, and the environment.

Ladies and gentlemen,

This 9th edition of the Africa Animal Welfare Conference comes at a time when Africa continues to face mounting challenges such as biodiversity loss, climate change, and pollution. Recognizing the intricate link between animal welfare, environmental sustainability, and human well-being, this year's conference is focusing on strengthening actions that contribute to a resilient planet and a sustainable future. This focus resonates well with the theme for the 7th session of the United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA-7) ***“Advancing Sustainable Solutions for a Resilient Planet”*** that will be taking place later this year.

The Africa Animal Welfare Conferences have over the years sought to promote a better understanding of the interconnected issue of animal welfare, human health and environment. This is central to the UN One Health Approach, which acknowledges the close links between human, animal, and environmental health.

Ladies and gentlemen,

As you are aware, the Africa Animal Welfare Conferences led to the adoption of the landmark Animal Welfare, Environment, Sustainable Development Nexus Resolution during the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly (UNEA 5.2) in Nairobi in March 2022. The resolution highlighted the critical link between the wellbeing of animals,

human health and ecosystem preservation and provides a vital framework towards improving the welfare of animals and environmental sustainability.

Since its adoption, a scoping report has been developed highlighting methodologies and process for the implementation of the resolution. However, due to budgetary constraints, not much progress has been made in its implementation.

Ladies and gentlemen,

I would like to take this opportunity to emphasize that UNEP is committed to encouraging opportunities for engagement in UNEP-led inter-governmental processes such as UNEA which provides an opportunity for diverse groups of stakeholders to equally contribute to global environmental governance. One of UNEP's objectives is to ensure that stakeholders are heard, listened to and that their input is mainstreamed into the work of UNEP. As such and as has been the practice, this Conference will have a session tomorrow where participants will be able to learn more about UNEP and its governing bodies, how to become formally accredited and how to be involved in UNEP-led processes and UNEA, especially the upcoming UNEA-7.

In this regard, UNEP had actively supported civil society engagement in Africa over recent years by having focused efforts to increase the participation of organizations from Africa in intergovernmental decision-making processes. As a result, we have witnessed a significant rise in engagement and the number of registered African stakeholders in recent years. This was exemplified recently during the just concluded 20th session of the African Ministerial Conference on the Environment (AMCEN) that took place in Nairobi, Kenya. This growth reflects UNEP's commitment to strengthening the role of African civil society in shaping environmental policy both at a regional and global level.

Ladies and gentlemen,

In conclusion, I trust that you will find this Conference a fruitful and productive experience. This is an opportunity to share expert knowledge, compare valuable experiences, encourage innovation, and foster new partnerships on a range of issues in the field of animal welfare, human health and the environment.

I wish you fruitful deliberations and look forward to the outcomes of this key event.