Inputs to HLPF Session Protecting the planet and building resilience

1. *Systems transformation*

What are the fundamental systems transformations needed to halt nature degradation, reverse loss and manage risk, while eradicating poverty, ensuring food security for a growing population, securing livelihoods and promoting resilience?

Effective system transformation demands jointly tackling common drivers of biodiversity loss, ecosystem degradation and inequality, themselves exacerbated by a changing climate in a positive feedback loop. Some ways forward for achieving effective systems transformation at this nexus include:

Create enabling environments to fundamentally transform food systems:

Business as usual is jeopardizing efforts to ensure access to healthy, sustainable foods and diets, with severe negative consequences. The latter include environmental impacts (from increased greenhouse gas emissions to soil erosion, biodiversity loss, and pollution), social impacts (from increased non–communicable diseases to the erosion of food cultures and cultural traditions), and economic impacts (from a decline in rural economies to the volatility of the global market). A change at scale in how people interact with their environment to achieve the goals of food and nutrition security is required.

- Achieving healthy and sustainable food production systems requires taking greater responsibility for **food value chains**, implementing incentives to leverage action, and introducing policies that place a value on both sustainability and health outcomes.
- A **systems/landscape approach** to food must be at the heart of sustainable diets not only to maximize nutritional and environmental benefits but also to contribute to broader aim of maximizing co-benefits for people, biodiversity, and ecosystems.
- Landscape management and land use planning should seek to optimize healthy sustainable diets, **beyond single focused interventions** (increased yields, conservation, adequate nutrition) at the expense of other interconnected issues that could otherwise maximize the potential to achieve co-benefits and achieve equity.
- Food systems reform requires that more integrated solutions at all scales through a **systems–level approach** and with meaningful participation of all stakeholders including farmers and food systems workers, Indigenous Peoples, government and policymakers, philanthropy, researchers, grassroots movements, and the private sector.

Scaling up nature-based solutions

Nature-based solutions to climate adaptation and mitigation are increasingly recognised as low-cost approaches with numerous co-benefits. Approximately one quarter of CO2 emissions are attributable to ecosystem degradation alone. According to the 2019 IPBES Global Assessment, implementing nature-based solutions are not only more socially acceptable, and less costly in the long term, they can also provide over one third of the CO2 emissions reductions needed to keep emissions below 2 degrees by 2030.

For example, natural flood management can help to reduce flooding in populated areas by restoring upland river valleys to their natural habitat, which absorb rainwater and help slow the flow of excess run-off from greater numbers of trees and larger wetland or peatland areas. Trials of natural flood management have been highly successful and their implementation is expanding. It also offers the additional benefit of climate mitigation, by restoring wetland, peatland and forests, all of which absorb carbon dioxide and act as carbon sinks.

Align financial flows with the required systems transformations: Significant investments, both public and private, are needed to achieve transformative change and scale up nature-based solutions. Early action should focus on innovative projects that jointly deliver benefits for people, nature, climate and development. There also needs to be better regulations to guide private investment, as public finance alone is unable to deliver the scale of change required. Financial institutions should avoid financing activities that are harmful to nature.

2. *Specific actions to drive transformation*
Please describe 2-3 specific, promising actions at different levels that can drive these systems transformations. These actions could relate for instance to scaling up the use of nature-based solutions, sustainable consumption and production, or other approaches. How have these actions helped (or how could they help) break down siloes, support the systemic management of risk, and trigger positive changes in society? How can co-benefits between actions be maximized and the risk in trade-offs stemming from these actions (i.e. negative impacts on other aspects of the 2030 Agenda) managed?

- Strengthening cross-sectoral coordination mechanisms, approaches and processes (at all levels of governance) to protect the environment from water, air, land and soil pollution and protect biodiversity and ecosystems to safeguard life-sustaining ecosystem services.
- Monitor risks to ecosystem health and human health and take steps to mitigate them, especially for vulnerable and disadvantaged population groups (including the poor, women and children).
- Raise awareness of and take steps to mitigate the impact of climate change on population health, including by fostering resilient health systems.
- Contribute to climate change mitigation and adaptation and disaster risk reduction through nature-based solutions to achieve the goals of the Paris Agreement, complementing stringent emission reductions, and avoiding negative impacts on biodiversity, and food and nutrition security.
- Making nature-based solutions part of country commitments to achieve transformational change (e.g. through their integration in NDCs under the UNFCCC.
- Assess the ecological, health and health equity impacts of proposed infrastructure, mining and other development projects that may pose risks to both ecosystem functioning and human health.
- Support local food production and sustainable agricultural and fishery practices and consumption (in ways that promote food biodiversity to achieve healthy and sustainable diets), including by removing perverse economic incentives that contribute to overcapacity, unsustainable harvesting and overfishing.
- Create enabling environments that promote more integrated action to support nutrition and reduce noncommunicable diseases by taking greater responsibility for food value

chains, implementing incentives to leverage action, and introducing policies such as economic incentives, subsidies and taxation measures that jointly support health and ecological sustainability.

- Improve systems for food safety and food security, especially for low-income communities and other disadvantaged groups, which are often those most directly reliant upon biodiversity as direct sources of food, medicines, shelter, and livelihoods and those least covered by social protection mechanisms, including access to public health.
- Build "green" health and public facilities and advocate environmentally beneficial principles and stewardship across all sectors.

3. *Means of implementation and the global partnership for development (SDG 17):*
   Achieving the 2030 Agenda relies on a combination of means of implementation to catalyse action and engagement, harness synergies and reduce tradeoffs. Please discuss the means of implementation, including finance, partnerships, and capacity building, needed to make the necessary transformations. How can science, technology and innovation (STI), including social innovation and local and indigenous knowledge, be mobilized to advance these transformations?

• WHO's Healthier Populations division can contribute the health dimension to cross UN-guidance on recovery from COVID-19, and from there into the Nationally Determined Contributions to UNFCCC COP26, and into CBD COP15.
• WHO/HEP has drafted a "manifesto" for a green and health recovery, which outlines the principles and goals through which the COVID recovery can promote pandemic preparedness, reduce health vulnerability and protect the climate and environment. This can be shared with other UN agencies.
Additional platforms and partnership that can be leveraged to accelerate action and engagements are:
• CBD and WHO convene an Interagency Liaison Group including the other relevant UN family agencies and external parters (UNEP, UNFCCC etc.). This met from 4-6 May, and will produce a Global Plan of Action on biodiversity and health for CBD COP15, including proposals for strengthening the environment component of the Onehealth tripartite between WHO, FAO and OIE, which is considered the weak link of the collaboration.
• WHO is planning with the UK Presidency of UNFCCC COP26 on mobilization of frontline health professionals, and holding global climate and health conferences before and during the COP. The aim is to deploy health arguments, evidence and voices in direct support of a healthy and green COVID recovery, connected directly to each of the five COP26 Presidency priorities (nature-based solutions, transport, energy, resilience, finance).

4. *Covid-19 crisis*
   What does the Covid-19 crisis reveal about the human-nature relationship and systemic risk creation? How can nature-based solutions contribute to a post-COVID-19

economic and social recovery that is more sustainable, equitable and resilient? What immediate and medium-term steps are needed to ensure that the post-COVID-19 economic and social recovery is sustainable, equitable and resilient. How can we redirect financial flows and direct recovery efforts to create better outcomes for people, prosperity and planet?

COVID-19 constitutes the greatest global health shock in decades. Although the world had been warned for many years that a major infectious disease pandemic was inevitable, the rapid emergence and spread of SARS-CoV-2 has demonstrated how poorly prepared we have been. It has shown up weaknesses in national systems and international cooperation for pandemic preparedness and response; lack of access to basic health services for billions of people, including tens of millions in rich countries; and massive health inequalities both between countries, and within them - strongly driven by socioeconomic status, ethnicity and gender.

Despite the human suffering caused by COVID-19, the changes are causing many to reconsider what is most important in our societies, and our relationship with the planet.
Decisions made in the coming months can either "lock in" economic development patterns that will do permanent and escalating damage to the ecological systems that sustain all human health or, if wisely taken, can promote a healthier, fairer, and greener world.

WHO and the health community vision for a healthy post-COVID planet is built on two main arguments:
•   Protecting the natural environment is an essential health intervention. Reducing deforestation, managing the wildlife trade, integrated surveillance of infection in wildlife, livestock and humans – all reduce the risk of another COVID-19 crisis, which the world cannot afford.
•   COVID-19 Recovery packages can build back better, for the environment, economy and health. While the human cost of COVID-19 has been too high, people have noticed the improvements in air and water quality, reductions in traffic etc. resulting from lockdowns, and will want to preserve these during the recovery. Health is a strong argument for "Green New Deals" that prioritize clean and modern, rather than polluting, economic activity.
Global economic investments have the potential to shape the future of humanity in the coming decades. They shape the way we work, consume, we move and we built our resilience systems. Nowhere is this more important than in their effects on environmental degradation and pollution, and particularly on the carbon emissions that are driving global warming and the climate crisis.

Key recommended actions of the WHO Manifesto for green and health recovery are:
1) Protect the source of human health: the natural ecosystems
2) Ensure essential services, from water and sanitation, to energy in healthcare facilities:
3) Invest in the energy systems of the future, not the past.
4) Build healthy, liveable cities.
5) Promote healthy, sustainable diets.
5) Stop using taxpayers money to fund pollution.