

17th June, 2021

**H.E. Mr. Nicolas de Rivière
UN Security Council President**

**c/o Permanent Mission of the Republic of France to the United Nations
245 East 47th Street, 44th Floor
New York, NY 10017**

Your Excellency,

I turn to you in light of the global pandemic caused by COVID-19. As of today, COVID-19 has killed more than 3.7 million people, infected over 173 million, and had an immense economic impact. The resulting loss of life and livelihoods are yet to be fully realized and will last long into the future.

Scientists and researchers have cautiously traced the outbreak to a “wet market” in Wuhan, China. Wet markets are places where animals (wild and domesticated) are bought, sold, and slaughtered for human consumption. (These places are so called partially in reference to the blood, excrement, and other uncontained biological fluids involved in the holding and killing of these animals.)

At Animal Equality, our mission of protecting animals has a direct impact on the health of humans and our planet. Never has this been more true than now, and never has the need for a joint response to the challenges we face been more urgent. That is why we started an international campaign demanding a ban on the sale of live animals at wet markets worldwide. Public support of the campaign has been tremendous, with over 569,675 people signing our petition calling for a ban.

Today, we present to you the names of more than half a million individuals calling on the UN Security Council to pass a resolution banning the sale of live animals at wet markets in UN Member States.

Other global leaders share our concerns. On 12 April 2021, the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), and the UN

Environment Programme (UNEP) released a guidance document¹ calling for an immediate suspension in the trade in live caught wild animals due to zoonotic disease concerns.

We urge the UNSC to incorporate this recommendation into a binding resolution that also encompasses **sales of domesticated animals, captive-bred wild animals, and wild-caught animals of all species (not just mammalian)**. The welfare of animals of *all* species sold at these markets is of great concern, and the next global pandemic could just as easily come from a bird as from a bat or a pangolin. During the human outbreak of avian influenza A (H5N1) in 1997, for instance, a visit to a retail poultry stall or a market selling live poultry in the week before onset of illness was significantly associated with the risk of becoming infected. As the WHO, OIE, and UNEP report stated, “Avian influenza viruses ... can be transmitted from infected animals to humans during handling and slaughter in the traditional market setting. **It is therefore important to limit, as far as possible, close contact between live animals, slaughtering operations and humans in such markets.**”²

This recommendation is in step with considerations ongoing in your home country of Estonia right now as well, where the Estonian Parliament is working on policy measures to reduce the risk of zoonotic diseases from animals kept in cruel and unhygienic conditions. Although the conversation in Estonia is around fur farms, the motivation for passing restrictions is the same: Tarmo Tamm, the chairman of the Estonian Parliament’s Rural Affairs Committee, expressed hope that a ban would soon be enacted due to the fact that approximately 70 percent of the Estonian population already supports legislative action to reduce cruel practices and the pandemic risks associated with inhumane animal treatment. These same concerns exist in relation to live animals at wet markets around the world.

As President of the UNSC next month, Your Excellency is in a prime position to raise this critical security issue at the next Council meeting. COVID-19 is not an isolated incident – merely the most recent one. Like COVID-19 and H5N1, other disease outbreaks such as SARS have been scientifically linked to wet markets. Animals in

¹ *Reducing public health risks associated with the sale of live wild animals of mammalian species in traditional food markets*, World Health Organization (12 April 2021), <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-2019-nCoV-Food-safety-traditional-markets-2021.1> (jointly released by the WHO, OIE, and UNEP).

² *ibid.*, p. 3.

these markets are packed into small cages or spaces, where the lower levels of the cages are inundated with the fluids and excrements of the upper ones.

Dr. Anthony Fauci, Director of the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, and Dr. Joseph Fair, Vice President and Director of Research and Development for Metabiota, are among the cadre of renowned scientists and virologists that have warned authorities of the public health dangers associated with the sale of live animals at wet markets. Ending these sales is critical to avoid the proliferation of new pathogens that will inevitably make their way to humans due to the unsanitary conditions and poor health of the animals confined and killed there.

We politely request that Your Excellency put the issue of live animal sales on the agenda for the next UNSC meeting. Please heed the voices of the 569,675 petitioners calling for a Security Council resolution that would ban the sale of live animals in these dangerous and inhumane places. Such a resolution is necessary to protect our health, the health of our loved ones, and the well-being of the animals with whom we share our planet.

The next pandemic could be right around the corner if nothing is done to eliminate the sale of live animals at wet markets and the risks such sales pose to all human and animal life on this planet.

Yours sincerely,

Sharon Núñez

President - Animal Equality