



## Editorial

# One Health: Where are we now and where to go?

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## One Health: Where are we now and where to go?

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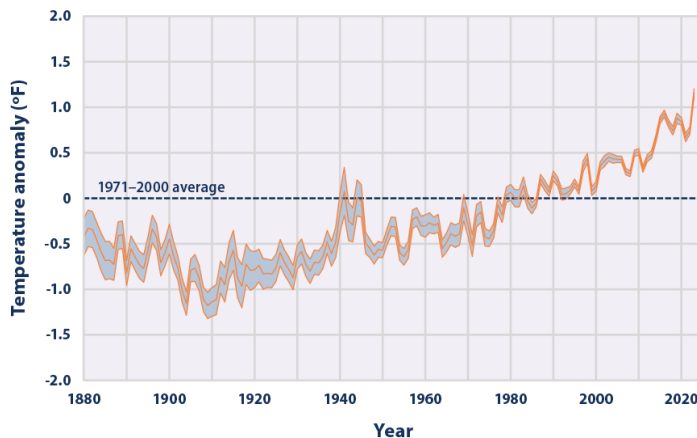
*Ultimately, the survival, not only of other life forms on this planet but of our own, will depend upon humanity's ability to recognize the oneness of all that exists and the importance and deeper significance of compassion for all life (Wiebers & Feigin, 2020 (1))*

### What happened?

Going through all the statistics describing our endangered world searching for mistakes or using them as they are, is not enough in front of the portal to the future just opening. Does the irreversible disaster lurk behind it, the decomposition of our world as it was (2)? The global COVID-19 epidemic may have been one of the last red lights.

One figure: Since 1970 a percentage of 69 of global wildlife is extinct (3), and another one (4): See Figure 1 showing the ongoing increase of the ocean's temperature.

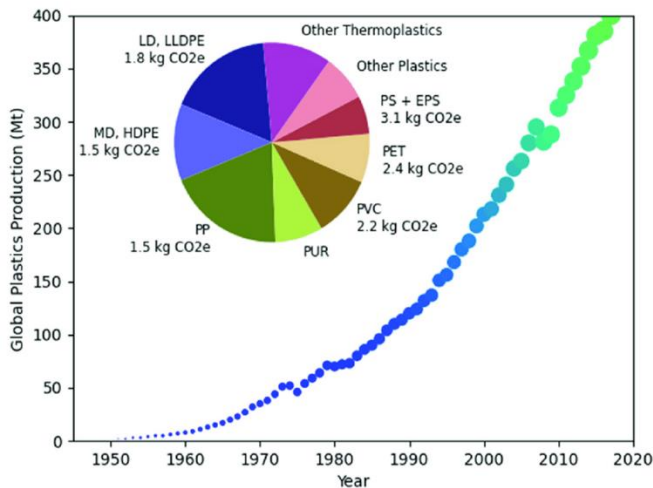
Figure 1. Average Global Sea Surface Temperature, 1880–2023



Furthermore, still seriously underestimated, the steep yearly increase of the plastics pandemic since the 1950ies to 430 million tons today (5). Microplastics are found even in in dairy products and human breast milk (6).



**Figure 2:** World plastic production throughout the years (1950-2019).



And a last one: According to the new Sustainable One Health Index (SOHI) (7) almost all countries are delayed in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDG) by 2030, but the developing countries more so by a factor of 1.6 if compared to the developed countries. It is a question of global justice to eliminate this gap as we cannot expect ‘...those without power and those who are being deprived to behave according to One Health approaches’ (8).

### Where we are!

Most world regions' current economic, social, and environmental trajectories are unsustainable. Interaction between bottom-up initiatives and top-down good governance is essential to change them (9). The One Health movement, comprised of many organizations, groups, and individuals from diverse backgrounds and disciplines, seeks to redress the present trajectories but needs more cooperation and coordination to improve its effectiveness. Interaction and cooperation between CSOs/NGOs are not regular and not structured around shared issues of relevance (10). How did it happen that we find ourselves in such an endangered situation and are unable to react and prevent the catastrophe that appeared on the horizon?

When around 12.000 years BC, the small hunter communities began to settle in larger agglomerations, the mutual support based on knowing each other and depending on each other had to be replaced by overarching, i.e., religious systems to keep them together (11). In the nineteenth century, science took over, uncovering the religious beliefs as fictitious but nevertheless functional. Can we return to our first nature, now in a global setting, and accept that everybody depends on all and all depend on everybody? The One Health concept provides the framework for this reality and offers to live, like in the times of the small hunter community, in harmony with our natural environment as defined by the United Nations Quadripartite (12): *One Health is an integrated, unifying approach that aims to sustainably balance and optimize the health of people, animals and ecosystems. It recognizes the health of humans, domestic and wild animals, plants, and the wider environment (including ecosystems) are closely linked and inter-dependent. The approach mobilizes multiple sectors, disciplines and communities*



*at varying levels of society to work together to foster well-being and tackle threats to health and ecosystems, while addressing the collective need for clean water, energy and air, safe and nutritious food, taking action on climate changes and contributing to sustainable development.*

### **Where to go?**

One Health activists, Civil Society Organizations, and stakeholders - and their constructive and balanced relationship with top-down governmental approaches are essential to positively impact the political processes and to protect our environment common to plants, animals, and people. To dynamize the United Nations System, persistent pressure from below is required. Governments, whether democratic or not, tend to move forward in the long run only if their population increasingly and repeatedly expresses and requests new orientations and new targets. Demands from below (13) and insight at the top (14), ideally, this can lead to an effective merger of the bottom-up and top-down – it can be described best as counterflow processes.

To move towards this combined effort, two supportive conditions are to be created:

- I. The present military conflicts aim to push borders and are based on the uniqueness of the outdated model of a national society. To help limit and solve them, the international community has to develop step by step an acknowledged and obligatory rule system based on the United Nations's 17 Sustainable Development Goals and their prolonged version after 2030 that integrates the environment and our neighbors, the plants, and the animals, and last not least the human kind, us! We cannot continue to destroy our own home, our planet! Where should we stay, then?
  
- II. Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) or Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) need more effective mechanisms of coordination and cooperation. There are 15,159 of them registered with the ECOSOC NGO- BRANCH of the United Nations (UN) (15); 48.6% are registered in the African Region alone. The dominant fields of activity are 'Economic and Social' (52.6%), 'Gender Issues and Advancement of Women' (34.4%), 'Social Development' (36.4%), and 'Sustainable Development' (41.1%), the term closest to One Health. As relevant regional and global CSOs/NGOs are not listed, searching other databases is necessary, e.g. the websites of the One Health Commission (OHC) (16) respectively the One Health Initiative (OHI) (17).

### **The future!**

The main task in the immediate future is in reach if we learn to organize speaking with stronger and one voice to policymakers, jurisdiction, and global organizations? Is there such an organizational/coordinative model for One Health initiatives/movements/CSOs/NGOs?



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