
Pandemics Result From Destruction of Nature: UN, WHO & WWF Warn

By: Telesur
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Leaders from three international organizations — the United Nations, the World Health Organization and World Wildlife Fund International — teamed up to issue a stark warning that pandemics like COVID-19 are a direct result of the destruction of nature caused by humans, The Guardian reported Wednesday.

The top figures from each organization argued that the illegal and unsustainable wildlife trade, as well as the devastation of forests and other wild places, were still the driving forces behind the increasing number of diseases leaping from wildlife to humans.

"We have seen many diseases emerge over the years, such as Zika, Aids, Sars, and Ebola and they all originated from animal populations under conditions of severe environmental pressures," the head of the U.N. convention on biological diversity Elizabeth Maruma Mrema; WHO director for environment and health Maria Neira; and the head of WWF International Marco Lambertini said.

With COVID-19, "these outbreaks are manifestations of our dangerously unbalanced relationship with nature."

"We must embrace a just, healthy, and green recovery and kickstart a wider transformation towards a model that values nature as the foundation for a healthy society. Not doing so, and instead attempting to save money by neglecting environmental protection, health systems, and social safety nets has already proven to be a false economy. The bill will be paid many times over," they warned.

High-level figures have been issuing a series of warnings since March, with the world's leading biodiversity experts saying even more deadly disease outbreaks are likely in the future unless the rampant destruction of the natural world is rapidly halted.

Earlier in June, the U.N. environment chief and a leading economist had also warned that COVID-19 was an "SOS signal for the human enterprise" and that current economic thinking did not recognise that human wealth depends on nature's health.

Meanwhile, a WWF report, also published on Wednesday, warns that "the risk of a new [wildlife-to-human] disease emerging in the future is higher than ever, with the potential to wreak havoc on health, economies and global security."

"There is no debate, and the science is clear; we must work with nature, not against it. Unsustainable exploitation of nature has become an enormous risk to us all," said the head of WWF International, in a press release that accompanied the new report.