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Statement submitted by World Society for the Protection of Animals, a non-governmental organization in consultative status with the Economic and Social Council

The Secretary-General has received the following statement, which is being circulated in accordance with paragraphs 30 and 31 of Economic and Social Council resolution 1996/31.

* E/2011/100.



Statement*

Education is of high priority for the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), with specific emphasis on promoting opportunities for quality education for all to help create a sustainable world. Education for sustainable development focuses on integrating sustainable messaging into formal and non-formal education, while encouraging skills development to create responsible global citizens. Human and animal welfare are linked in many ways, including ways recognized by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the International Finance Corporation of the World Bank Group. Leading up to the United Nations Conference on Sustainable Development in 2012, recognition of the role that animal welfare plays in impacting the three pillars of sustainability is critical. Humane and responsible management of animals can positively impact people, the environment, individual animals and species, thereby making animal welfare an effective tool to help achieve sustainable development. Some examples include the links to safeguarding and stabilizing livelihoods, reducing poverty, protecting human health and safeguarding food production. Roughly 1 billion people depend directly on animals for income, social status and security as well as food and clothing.¹

In order to achieve a higher global standard of animal welfare, understanding of animals and their needs has to be integrated holistically into education systems. Humane education focuses on the same principles as education for sustainable development and is centred on values-based learning highlighting social justice, citizenship, environmental education and animal welfare. Animal welfare education is one element of humane education and promotes knowledge, understanding and skills related to human involvement in the lives of animals, while developing learners' empathy, morals and ethics. Beyond teaching about animal welfare specifically, effective animal welfare education uses interactive teaching methods that promote skills development. By introducing innovative methodology into teaching conventionally focused on rote memorization, educators can help students develop critical-thinking, problem-solving and decision-making skills, which are imperative to being able to make informed decisions that will contribute to their societies' well-being.

Providing children with opportunities to learn about animals in their communities benefits the animals as well. In many developing countries, animal husbandry duties often fall upon children and women; thus, when children and others learn about the animals in their communities, they promote the animals' health and well-being. This can lead to increased productivity of the animals, higher incomes for the families and more time available for children to attend school, all of which are vital steps towards eliminating poverty.

The World Society for the Protection of Animals (WSPA) appreciates the benefits that animal welfare can provide and thus works to bring such learning opportunities to audiences worldwide. Animal welfare education has been recognized by the United Nations, and the WSPA First Concepts in Animal Welfare programme has

* The present statement is being issued without formal editing.

¹ FAO, *Capacity-building to Implement Good Animal Welfare Practices: Report of the FAO Expert Meeting, Rome, 30 September-3 October 2008* (Rome, 2009). Available from http://ec.europa.eu/food/animal/welfare/international/docs/meeting_rep_4days_300908_en.pdf.

been endorsed regionally by the UNESCO offices in Latin America and the Caribbean and the United Nations Decade of Education for Sustainable Development in Asia and the Pacific. WSPA calls upon the United Nations to recognize animal welfare education as an invaluable aspect of education for sustainable development and to integrate its values into current education goals.
