

## CASE STUDY: UNIVERSAL DECLARATION ON ANIMAL WELFARE (UDAW)

### What is UDAW?

The Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW) campaign was conceived by a group of animal welfare organisations, including World Animal Protection in 2000. The campaign aims for United Nations Member States to recognise that animals are sentient, and that animal welfare is integral to the achievement of globally important goals, including the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). It also aims to commit UN Member States to protecting the welfare of animals through the adoption of a UDAW at the UN General Assembly.

If adopted, a UDAW will promote and enable the spread of animal protection legislation and initiatives. It will have a non-binding moral authority encouraging governments to respect the declaration's principles when formulating policies, legislation and regulation that can affect the welfare of animals.

The UDAW will provide a benchmark for animal welfare standards for governments, farmers, businesses, non-governmental organisations and anyone involved in working with animals. Including animal welfare in environmental and development policies can bring about enormous benefits. It can help achieve environmental sustainability, tackle poverty, reduce the risk of diseases transmissible to humans and maintain livelihoods and food security in times of disaster.

### What has been our approach?

The campaign's focus was initially largely public facing, calling on people to sign an '*animals matter to me*' petition and demanding a UDAW from the UN. To date, this petition has received well over 2.5 million signatures from members of the public, celebrities and politicians worldwide.

World Animal Protection and the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA) jointly launched a draft declaration text at their biennial conference in 2000. This text was then simplified into core principles by 19 government representatives attending the Manila Conference on Animal Welfare in 2003. A steering committee of five government representatives (one from each geographical region) met in Costa Rica in 2005. The committee agreed to champion a UDAW with their governments back home, and proposed further amendments to the text.

In 2007, the UDAW became World Animal Protection's leading campaign. Intensified lobbying of intergovernmental organisations and governments began regionally. International organizations, inter-governmental bodies and individual governments were engaged, lobbied, etc. and asked if they would commit, in principle, to supporting the adoption of a UDAW if and when it would be included on the agenda of the UN General Assembly.

Since then, 67 national governments, either individually or as a member of an inter-governmental body, have committed in writing that they do commit, in principle, to supporting a UDAW. Similarly, the international organization for animal health (OIE) and a further 130 international, regional and national veterinary and civil society organizations have expressed support for the adoption of a UDAW.

Since 2012, the UDAW campaign strategy refocused on introducing the concept of animal welfare into UN processes and international agreements and resolutions. Some examples of achievements since then:

- 2014 – The United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS – representing 130 countries) adopts the [CFS principles for Responsible Investments in Agriculture and Food Systems](#). Principle 8.ii states that human health and safety are promoted through supporting animal health and welfare to

sustainably increase productivity, product quality, and safety. The UN General Assembly has since endorsed these CFS Principles and called for all states, business enterprises, farmers, and communities to promote, support and utilize the Principles.

- 2015 - [The third World Conference on Disaster Risk Reduction \(WCDRR\)](#), held in Sendai, Japan, agrees that in order to reduce disaster losses and enhance disaster resilience all nations must, as a matter of priority, take action to protect livelihoods and productive assets, including livestock, working animals, tools and seeds.
- 2015 - The United Nations Sustainable Development Summit 2015 adopts '[Transforming our world: the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development](#)' in which all member nations of the UN set out their shared vision for the world in which humanity lives in harmony with nature and in which wildlife and other living species are protected.
- 2016 - The United Nations Committee on World Food Security (CFS) agreed on a set of [recommendations for sustainable agriculture development with a focus on livestock](#) which, very prominently and explicitly, includes the recommendation that animal welfare must be improved in all livestock production systems.

Additionally, along with the work undertaken by our Africa Team to develop and get the African Union to adopt the '[Animal Welfare Strategy for Africa \(AWSA\)](#)', the adoption of a UDAW was included as one of the key tasks assigned to the Africa Platform for Animal Welfare (APAW - the body established to encourage implementation of the AWSA) and a group of six African nations wrote letters to commit, in principle, to support the adoption of a UDAW by the UN General Assembly.

### **Where are we now?**

With the growing support for UDAW amongst African states as well as a growing appreciation of the relevance of animals and their welfare to sustainable development we believe that the time is now ripe to initiate the final stage of the UDAW campaign and seek the inclusion of a UDAW resolution in the agenda of the UN General Assembly.

An initial scoping mission was undertaken in October 2019 to assess the feasibility, scenarios and timelines for the adoption of a UDAW resolution. The feedback from Member States and UN organizations has been universally positive. It is currently envisioned to use 2020 to establish the importance of improving animal welfare to the achievement of the sustainable development goals and to find national sponsors for a UDAW resolution so that a UDAW will be adopted by the UN General Assembly in 2021.