

PETITION TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL AND MEMBER STATES

RE: Adoption of the UN Convention on Animal Health and Protection (UNCAHP)

We, the undersigned, respectfully urge the United Nations and its Member States to advance the adoption of the UN Convention on Animal Health and Protection (UNCAHP), a landmark international framework that would establish binding legal standards for animal welfare across participating countries.

The United Nations has, over decades, established comprehensive international frameworks to protect children, refugees, workers, and the natural environment. These frameworks reflect the international community's recognition that certain forms of suffering demand a coordinated, accountable global response.

No comparable global legal framework exists for animals.

An estimated **680 million stray dogs and cats** live without legal protection in cities and communities around the world. An estimated **46 million working horses, donkeys, and mules** provide essential labor in developing economies, often under conditions of chronic neglect. In the majority of nations, no binding international law governs how these animals are treated, no global body within the UN system is mandated to advocate for their welfare and no international legal mechanism exists to hold governments accountable for systemic animal cruelty.

This is not a minor omission. It is a structural failure of the international legal order, one with measurable consequences for animal welfare, public health, and community safety worldwide.

We Therefore Call Upon the United Nations and Member States To:

- 1. Formally recognize animal welfare as a matter of international concern** deserving of the same structural attention currently afforded to human welfare, environmental protection, and labor rights under existing UN frameworks.
- 2. Convene a working group or special committee** charged with drafting, refining, and advancing the text of the UN Convention on Animal Health and Protection (UNCAHP) toward a vote before the UN General Assembly.

3. Establish, within the UN system, a designated body or mandate responsible for coordinating international animal welfare standards, advising member states on implementation, and reporting on global animal welfare conditions – closing the current institutional gap that leaves animals without a formal advocate in the international system.

4. Adopt binding minimum standards under UNCAHP that address:

- The welfare and humane management of stray and community animals, including access to veterinary care where feasible and protection from mass culling without scientific basis.
- The working conditions and welfare standards for working animals, including horses, donkeys, and mules, used for labor in agriculture, transport, and commerce.
- National-level implementation and enforcement obligations, with reporting mechanisms and accountability measures for signatory states.

5. Recognize the One Health, One Welfare framework as a guiding principle – acknowledging that the health of humans, animals, and ecosystems are deeply interconnected, and that animal welfare policy is not separate from, but integral to, global public health and sustainable development goals.

Supporting Rationale

The case for UNCAHP is not merely ethical, it is practical.

Zoonotic diseases, many of which originate in unmanaged stray animal populations, represent a documented and growing global health risk. The humane management of stray populations through evidence-based programs including spay/neuter, vaccination, and veterinary access reduces disease transmission, decreases bite incidents, and improves community safety. These outcomes require the kind of consistent, funded, nationally coordinated programs that are more likely to emerge when international standards create the floor.

Working animals represent an invisible workforce. In many low and middle income countries, horses, donkeys, and mules are important means of transportation and agricultural labor for millions of people. Their welfare is inseparable from the economic welfare and food security of the communities that depend on them. International standards that ensure their basic health and humane treatment are not in conflict with development goals, they are essential to them.

There is precedent for international frameworks shaping national policy. The International Labour Organization has demonstrated that binding international labor standards can raise the floor across diverse national contexts. The Convention on the Rights of the Child has created more accountability for child welfare globally. UNCAHP asks for nothing more than a similar commitment, one that acknowledges the moral and practical imperative to extend international legal protection to the animals who share our world.

We sign this petition not as sentimentalists, but as informed global citizens who recognize that the international system has the tools and frameworks to act if there is sufficient will to use them. The absence of action is itself a choice.

Animals cannot present this petition. We do so on their behalf.

We urge the United Nations and Member States to move swiftly. The gap in international animal protection law has existed too long. The moment to close it is now.

Submitted by the supporters of Global Strays and the UNCAHP Campaign