

Role of CITES in reducing risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade



Three-quarters of emerging infectious diseases are zoonotic in origin, and almost all known pandemics are zoonoses[1]. In fact, the most probable explanation for the Covid-19 pandemic, according to the scientific opinion, is that it originated in wild animals with the live wildlife trade and a live animal market being the likely source[2]. Several factors, such as close contact between wildlife, livestock and humans, increase the risk of a pathogen spillover. The risk of pandemics has been reported to be rapidly increasing[3].

It has been widely recognized that international wildlife trade contributes to the risk of zoonotic pathogen emergence and disease transmission, the lack of hygiene and the mixing of species in wildlife trade, for instance, creates the ideal conditions for the spread of pathogens. A 2020 study showed that 63 pathogenic organisms, some of which are transmissible to humans, and 83 clinical symptoms and diseases associated with these pathogens were found in captive lions on South African breeding farms[4]. FOUR PAWS believes that due to the nature of CITES, the Multilateral Environmental Agreement that regulates international trade in wild flora and fauna, it should play a central role in addressing the risk associated to wildlife trade, and calls on all Parties to adhere to the Precautionary Principle and incorporate the One Health approach by the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) when implementing the Convention.

FOUR PAWS commends the draft Resolution and associated Decisions proposed in CoP19 Doc. 23.2, especially the inclusion of the One Health definition developed by the OHHLEP, which recognizes the importance and interconnectedness of human health, animal health and the environment. FOUR PAWS generally welcomes the recommendations arising from SC74, contained in CoP19 Doc. 23.1 from the intersessional working group on the role of CITES in reducing the risk of future zoonotic disease emergence associated with international wildlife trade. FOUR PAWS believes in the importance of collaboration as well as the pursuit of emerging opportunities with competent animal and public health authorities and international bodies (e.g., the Quadripartite). In particular, the continuation of cooperation with the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE) with the appropriate updates of the cooperation agreement and a joint programme of work. However, given the need for urgency raised during the intersessional working group, FOUR PAWS remains concerned that the need for immediate action to advance the One Health approach is not reflected in CoP19 Doc. 23.1, as draft decisions 19.HH and 19.II would postpone the elaboration of a Resolution to outline CITES' contribution to advancing a One Health approach.

FOUR PAWS calls the CoP19 to

- Adhere to the Precautionary Principle and adopt a One Health approach according to the OHHLEP, when implementing the Convention, in particular when regulating captive-breeding/farming, as well as the trade and sale of live specimens of CITES-listed animal species and products.
- Recognize the central role of CITES in addressing the risks of zoonotic disease transmission associated with wildlife trade and the need for urgent action and develop a One Health CITES Action Plan to reduce risks along the international wildlife supply chain.
- In collaboration with the competent authorities, develop a health risk assessment that considers animal, human and environmental health as a requirement for the granting of trade permits and certificates.
- Support the adoption of the draft Resolution and associated Decisions in CoP19 Doc. 23.2 submitted by Côte d'Ivoire, Gabon, The Gambia, Liberia, Niger, Nigeria and Senegal.

[1]WHO, Zoonotic disease: emerging public health threats in the Region, accessed September 2022, <https://www.emro.who.int/fr/about-who/rc61/zoonotic-diseases.html>

[1]The Huanan Seafood Wholesale Market in Wuhan was the early epicenter of the COVID-19 pandemic, SCIENCE 26 Jul 2022, Vol 377, Issue 6609, pp. 951-959, accessed September 2022, <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abbp8715>

[1]Jamison DT, Gelband H, Horton S, et al., editors. Washington (DC): The International Bank for Reconstruction and Development / The World Bank; 2017 Nov 27.

[1] Green J, Jakins C, Asfaw E, Bruschi N, Parker A, de Waal L, D'Cruze N. African Lions and Zoonotic Diseases: Implications for Commercial Lion Farms in South Africa. *Animals* [Basel]. 2020 Sep 18;10(9):1692. doi: 10.3390/ani10091692. PMID: 32962130; PMCID: PMC7552683, accessed September 2022, <https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/32962130/>