

What is Article 4 about?

In the last Intergovernmental Negotiating Body meeting, Member States have decided that during the Drafting Group Meeting of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body between September 4-6, informal meetings are taking place, including in *relation to Articles 4 (Pandemic prevention and public health surveillance) and 5 (Strengthening pandemic prevention and preparedness through a One Health approach)*, in order to facilitate a more in-depth conversations and to build consensus on those as well as other articles of the Bureau's text. It is important that all Member States have information on the relevance of these two essential articles to the achievement of the Pandemic Instrument's objectives especially in relation to strengthening prevention and equity.

In Article 4 Member States are presented with two options,

- Option 4. A briefly states in one line that prevention and surveillance measures shall be taken “that are consistent with and supportive of effective implementation of the International Health Regulations.”
- Option 4. B provides a more elaborated iteration of what prevention would entail. The option includes the need for national infection prevention and control measures and plans to be developed or strengthened to address zoonotic diseases and pathogens. While taking into consideration Parties' capabilities, the scope outlined for these measures and plans includes, ensuring access to safe water, sanitation, hygiene measures and health services as measures to prevent diseases to spread of diseases in humans as well as animals; the implementation of national infection prevention and control measures inline with international guidelines, as well as prevention and control programmes in health care facilities; sound management of waste that could include pathogens; strengthening animal disease preventive measures, including, but not limited to, measures concerning farms, the transport of animals, live animal markets, trade in wild animals and veterinary practices for both food-producing and companion animals, taking into account the relevant international standards. It also calls for Parties to take action to prevent outbreaks due to anti-microbial resistant, to strengthen laboratory biosafety and biosecurity to prevent the accidental exposures of pathogens as well as strengthen and maintain public health laboratory and diagnostics capacities with the assistance of relevant regional and international institutions. When it comes to surveillances, Article 4. B calls for member states to strengthen and maintain the capacity to carry out integrated surveillance not only of infectious diseases in humans but also infectious diseases in animals that present significant risks for zoonotic, including vector-borne, spillover; and relevant samples taken from specific environmental settings for the purpose of preventing and controlling the spillover of potentially highly infectious pathogens, including antimicrobial resistant pathogens, across different animal species and between humans and animal populations.

Why is Article 4 important?

When it comes to pandemic prevention, Articles 4 and 5 are the only two articles in the current bureau text that outlined essential measures necessary for preventing pandemics, measures which must be incentivized and enabled within the instrument to support compliance. The Pandemic Instrument presents a historical opportunity via which Member States can design a mechanism that truly supports them with preventing outbreaks and spillover events, particularly zoonotic diseases before they become public health emergencies.

Limiting prevention measures as per Option 4. A to measures that are consistent with the implementation of the International Health Regulations, meaning after an outbreak has become a health emergency, is clearly not enough and is too late for vulnerable communities at the frontlines of these outbreaks. Limiting prevention measures to the stage after a health emergency will destine the instrument to failure on its equity promise before it even enters into force. Achieving equity means supporting communities who come into daily contact with pathogens in protecting themselves, animals and the environment so that outbreaks of pandemic potential are prevented at the outset. Effective prevention strategies inline with the One Health approach are crucial to achieving equity for these communities.

With more than 75 % of infections in humans originating in animals, the human health community cannot be left with the burden of action alone. The WHO and its member states must request the assistance and collaboration of institutions, specialized in protecting animals and the environment, in achieving the prevention objectives of the instrument. This is because fulfilling the objectives of the instrument and the mandate of the WHO to protect human health, relies upon the involvement of these institutions and a focus within the pandemic instrument on preventing spillover of pathogens from animals to humans.

Why should my government support and strengthen Option 4.B?

Around 7 million people died because of the COVID-19 pandemic, 34 million people were pushed into extreme poverty in 2020¹ and 13.8 trillion dollars are the expected economic losses from the pandemic through 2024². Clearly, it is essential to improve our global health law architecture to avoid a repeat of the negative global impacts of a pandemic.

The limited scope within Option 4. A of the current bureau text implies a limiting of the scope of the instrument to the same stage covered by the IHR which is the stage after a health emergency rather than a scope in which member states can prevent the health emergency to begin with by preventing spillover of pathogens from animals to humans. It was because of the devastation caused through the COVID-19 pandemic that the world came together to negotiate a Pandemic Instrument so that the shortcomings of the past are not repeated.

¹https://covid19.who.int/?adgroupsurvey=%7badgroupsurvey%7d&gclid=EAlaIQobChMI9tzC-ImvgAMVOYZoCR2VhQ1GEAAYASABEgIdpfd_BwE; https://www.un.org/en/desa/covid-19-slash-global-economic-output-85-trillion-over-next-two-years.

² <https://www.imf.org/en/Blogs/Articles/2022/01/25/blog-a-disrupted-global-recovery>.

Option 4. B, which includes a few important pandemic prevention requirements to prevent diseases from spreading in humans as well as animals, is the best option. Strengthening Option 4. B will be essential to ensure the full scope of needed preventive actions are captured. Elements that could strengthen Option 4. B include:

- Making clear that the measures tied to prevention begin at the stage before a pathogen spills over from animals to humans, by tackling the drivers of outbreaks and following a precautionary approach;
- Ensuring that prevention and control measures and programmes include addressing and preventing zoonotic outbreaks, infection prevention as well as high risk activities that can accelerate pathogen spillover, in their scope;
- Ensuring scientific, technical and financial support for prevention as well as the collaboration of international, regional and national institutions tasked with protecting animals and the environment, because prevention at those early or upstream stages will relieve health systems wherever possible by preventing health emergencies.

To truly prevent future global pandemics, stronger collaboration among human, animal and environmental health partners to coordinate actions that prioritize the detection of hotspots and high-risk practices that drive disease outbreaks will be needed. The World Bank's global estimate of prevention costs guided by One Health principles ranges from \$10.3 billion to \$11.5 billion per year, compared to the cost of managing pandemics which, according to the recent estimate by the G20 Joint Finance and Health Taskforce, amounts to about \$30.1 billion per year.³ Therefore, implementing these prevention measures are more cost effective than the effects of a pandemic. In other words, Member States who are seriously working to prevent another catastrophic global pandemic from ever happen again must select and strengthen Option 4. B, as it is more comprehensive, scientifically informed and cost effective than Option 4. A.

FOUR PAWS encourage Member States to choose Option 4. B.

³ Publication: Putting Pandemics Behind Us: Investing in One Health to Reduce Risks of Emerging Infectious Diseases. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/entities/publication/b8ac824f-1693-5226-b3bf-4d634f5e869e>.