

## Open letter to WHO Member States

*More than 120 multidisciplinary organisations and experts from all regions urge governments worldwide to take concrete steps to prevent future pandemics following a One Health approach to strengthen equity in the Pandemic Agreement.*

24th of April 2024

Ebola, HIV and COVID-19 are just a few of the 75% of all emerging infectious diseases that have originated or are likely to have originated in animals<sup>1</sup>. **Six out of seven WHO declarations of a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) have been zoonoses.** Another estimated 1.7 million currently “undiscovered” viruses are thought to exist in mammals and birds, of which up to 827,000 could infect people<sup>2</sup>. The numbers clearly show the urgency of addressing health risks at the human-animal-plants-environment interface. Deforestation, habitat degradation, agricultural intensification, land use change and wildlife trade are just a few examples of factors at this very interface that threaten human health daily<sup>3</sup> – particularly in communities in vulnerable situations<sup>4</sup>. **The way we treat animals**, changes in land-use patterns and the resultant change in our collective environment **has undoubtedly had an impact on human health.**

### Agreement needs to address health risks at the human-animal-environment interface

The Pandemic Agreement must address all three levels of pandemic strategies, i.e. prevention, preparedness and response measures. We, the signatory organisations and experts, explicitly recommend that the role of One Health<sup>5</sup> and primary pandemic prevention in addressing the root causes and drivers at the human-animal-plants-environment interface (deep/upstream prevention) must be strengthened in the current INB process. We are alarmed that some Member States have advocated for prevention rooted in the One Health approach to be weakened in the Pandemic Agreement. This would place the lives of people, particularly communities in vulnerable situations, at increased risk of pathogen spillover and subsequent disease outbreaks. **Weakening prevention and the One Health approach poses an enormous threat to the equity dimension of the Pandemic Agreement. There is currently no international health agreement that focuses on primary prevention, a void that the Pandemic Instrument must be designed to fill.**

### Primary prevention through the adoption of a comprehensive One Health approach enables equity and brings other important co-benefits

One Health enables equity by recognizing that communities have differing circumstances and by allocating technical, infrastructure and financial resources in a way that enables communities to sustainably move away from risky practices while maintaining their livelihoods and respecting indigenous communities’ knowledge, rights and practices<sup>6, 7</sup>. Examples of

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Environment Programme. Preventing the next pandemic – Zoonotic diseases and how to break the chain of transmission. UNEP – UN Environment Programme. 2020 May 15 [accessed 2022 Aug 17]. <http://www.unep.org/resources/report/preventing-future-zoonotic-disease-outbreaksprotecting-environment-animals-and>.

<sup>2</sup> Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform On Biodiversity And Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics of the Intergovernmental Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services (IPBES). Zenodo; 2020. <https://zenodo.org/record/4147317>. doi:10.5281/ZENODO.4147317.

<sup>3</sup> Dobson AP, Pimm SL, Hannah L, Kaufman L, Ahumada JA, Ando AW, Bernstein A, Busch J, Daszak P, Engelmann J, et al. Ecology and economics for pandemic prevention. *Science*. 2020;24;369(6502):379-381. <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/science.abc3189>. doi:10.1126/science.abc3189.

<sup>4</sup> Communities in vulnerable situations are those confronted with a potential outbreak at the human-animal-environment interface and at highest risk of health, social and economic consequences of pandemics.

<sup>5</sup> One Health (2021): <https://www.who.int/news/item/01-12-2021-tripartite-and-unep-support-ohlep-s-definition-of-one-health>.

<sup>6</sup> George Washington University: <https://onlinepublichealth.gwu.edu/resources/equity-vs-equality/>.

<sup>7</sup> Mettenleiter, Thomas & Winkler, Andrea & Alders, Robyn & Amuasi, John & Ashraf, Sania & Becker, Daniel & Bukachi, Salome & Burza, Sakib & Cleveland, Sarah & Omrani, Omnia & Erondu, Ngozi & Ferreira, Juliana & Hassan, Latiffah & Li, Binbin & Lloyd-Smith, James & Loch-Temzelides, Ted & Markotter, Wanda & Ogbuoi, Osondu & Peiris, Malik & Worah, Sejal. (2024). Draft of WHO Pandemic Agreement plays down primary prevention. *The Lancet*. 403. 525-526. [10.1016/S0140-6736\(24\)00066-7](https://doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(24)00066-7).



support through the One Health approach include: training of a multidisciplinary workforce; strengthening of human and animal health and disease surveillance systems and services; increasing community engagement; identifying and monitoring high risk pathogens in humans and animals; and financing pandemic prevention measures that mitigate drivers of these health threats.

Additionally, **pandemic prevention** centred on addressing the roots of pandemics, is the **most cost-effective strategy** costing a fraction of preparedness and response<sup>8</sup>, while also reducing pandemic-related morbidity, mortality and economic disruption.

### The road ahead


The **Pandemic Agreement must enable WHO Member States to address factors that drive the emergence of zoonoses in their countries based on national circumstances and involving all relevant sectors and actors through transdisciplinary collaboration**, by offering the supportive frameworks to develop and implement national One Health strategies which truly address their national risks, contexts and priorities. **Specific support - funding and technical assistance - should be secured and engaged to assist countries in need in the development of their One Health strategies to tackle the root causes of pandemics and support their basic health care systems (both human and animal health)**. If we truly want to avoid future pandemics, every effort must be made to mitigate the root causes of disease outbreaks in animals and prevent spillover at the human-animal-environment interface (primary prevention). **Improving animal welfare is a central component in the operationalization of a One Health approach to preventing pandemics.**



The undersigned organisations and experts emphasise that **to protect human health and enable equity, a balanced approach to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response through the adoption of One Health is a critical and achievable component of the Pandemic Agreement.**

Organisations	
Action for Animal Health	
Africa Network for Animal Welfare	

<sup>8</sup> Aaron S. Bernstein et al, The costs and benefits of primary prevention of zoonotic pandemics. Sci. Adv. 8, eabl4183(2022). DOI:10.1126/sciadv.abl4183.

Alentejo com Vida, Portugal	
American Anti-Vivisection Society	
Animal Action Greece	
Animal Defenders International	
Animal Friends Jogja	
Animal Interfaith Alliance	
Animal People, Inc.	
Animal Protection Society Udaipur	
Animals Asia	

Animals Australia	
Animals International	
APCASO	
Apostolic Voice University	
Aquatic Life Institute	
Asociación para el Rescate y Bienestar de los Animales (ARBA)	
Belize Wildlife & Referral Clinic, Belize	
Biodiversidad & Una Salud	


Blue Cross of India	
Born Free Foundation	
Brighter Green	
Campaigns and Activism for Animals in the Industry (CAAI)	
CATCA Environmental and Wildlife Society (CEWS) Canada	
Centre for Health Science and Law	
Centre for One Health Education, Research & Development (COHERD)	
Charity Doings Foundation	











Code Animal	
Compassion in World Farming International	
Cruelty Free International	
Deutscher Tierschutzbund	
Djurens Rätt	
Djurskyddet	
Eastern Africa National Networks of AIDS and Health Service Organizations (EANNASO)	
Environmental and Animal Rights Consultants LLP Pakistan	
Environment & Animal Society of Taiwan	

Ethical Seafood Research	
Eurogroup for Animals	
FOUR PAWS/ VIER PFOTEN International	
Global Federation of Animal Sanctuaries	
Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime	
Green REV Institute	
Health Research Center for the Tropics, Cooperative University of Colombia	
Hellenic Animal Welfare Federation	

Humane Society International	 <p><b>HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL</b></p>
Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar (IIPHG), India	 <p><b>INDIAN INSTITUTE of PUBLIC HEALTH GANDHINAGAR</b></p> <p><small>ESTABLISHED BY GOVT. OF GUJARAT AND PHFI</small></p>
Indigenous Peoples' Rights International	 <p><b>Indigenous Peoples Rights International</b></p> <p><small>Championing Indigenous Peoples Rights</small></p>
Indonesia One Health University Network	
International Companion Animal Management Coalition (ICAM)	 <p><small>INTERNATIONAL COMPANION ANIMAL MANAGEMENT COALITION</small></p>
International Coalition for Animal Protection	
International Fund for Animal Welfare	
International Union of Biological Sciences, IUBS	 <p><small>Unifying biology through diversity</small></p>
Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection (U.S. Partners in Animal Protection and Conservation)	



<p>Luontoliiton susiryhmä / The Wolf Action Group</p>	
<p>Neglected Global Diseases Initiative at the University of British Columbia</p>	
<p>Ohio State Global One Health, LLC</p>	
<p>OHLAIC CYTED Latin America</p>	
<p>One Health Alliance Jordan</p>	
<p>One Health Brasil</p>	
<p>One Health Commission</p>	
<p>One Health in Action Initiative</p>	

<p>One Health Latin America Ibero &amp; Caribbean Network</p>	
<p>Organisation Congo Prevention Secours OCPS</p>	
<p>Pan African Sanctuary Alliance</p>	
<p>Parapet Science &amp; Policy Consulting</p>	
<p>People's Vaccine Alliance - Asia (PVA Asia)</p>	
<p>Phoenix Zones Initiative</p>	
<p>Plataforma ALTO</p>	
<p>Preventing Pandemics at the Source (PPATS) Secretariat</p>	
<p>Pro Wildlife</p>	
<p>Proyecto Animales Latino América</p>	

Reacción Climática - Bolivia	
Re:wild	
Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA)	
Samayu, New Delhi (India)	
Sinergia Animal	
Sintesia Animalia Indonesia	
Society for International Development	
SPANAN	
Spark Street Advisors	
Species Survival Network	

Strength in Diversity Development Centre, Nigeria	
Tanzania Community Health Information and Support (TaCHIS)	 <p><b>TANZANIA COMMUNITY HEALTH INFORMATION AND SUPPORT (TaCHIS)</b></p>
The Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education, Columbia University	 <p><b>COLUMBIA</b> MAILMAN SCHOOL OF PUBLIC HEALTH GLOBAL CONSORTIUM ON CLIMATE AND HEALTH EDUCATION</p>
Three Monkeys Wildlife Conservancy	 <p><b>THREE MONKEYS WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY</b></p>
Universidad de Córdoba, One Health Colombia	 <p>UNIVERSIDAD DE CORDOBA FACULTAD DE CIENCIAS DE LA SALUD VETERINARIA Y ZOOTECNIA "VEHICULO MEDICINA"</p> <p><b>ONE HEALTH</b> Colombia</p>
Vétérinaires Sans Frontières - Germany	 <p><b>VSF Germany</b> Member of VSF International</p>
WACI Health	 <p><b>WACI HEALTH</b></p>
Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS)	 <p><b>WCS</b></p>
Wildlife Rescue Centre Jogja (WRC Jogja)	 <p><b>WRC</b> WILDLIFE RESCUE CENTRE Jogja</p>
World Animal Protection	 <p>WORLD <b>ANIMAL PROTECTION</b></p>

World Federation for Animals	
WWF International	
Zoological Society of London	
<b>Experts</b>	
Dr. Adeyinka Adedeji	National Veterinary Research Institute, Nigeria
Kamalu Muktar Aliyu	Lecturer II and Zoo Manager, Department of Forestry and Wildlife Management, Federal University Dutsin-Ma, Katsina State
Gian Luca Burci	Senior Visiting Professor of International Law, Graduate Institute of International and Development Studies, Geneva, Switzerland
Dr. Natalia Cediell Becerra, MV, MSc, PhD	Universidad De La Salle, Colombia - member of One Health High Level Expert Panel (2021-2023- 2024-2026) - Coordinator of Community of Practice Biodiversidad & Una Salud
Dr. Debajyoti Chatterjee	Director- Research & Policy, Samayu- New Delhi (India)
Dr. Dalia A. Conde	Associate Prof. University of Southern Denmark.
Dr. Ronald Allan L. Cruz	Ateneo Wildlife Trade Research and Advocacy Group, Ateneo de Manila University, Philippines
Prof. Andrew A. Cunningham	Institute of Zoology, Zoological Society of London, United Kingdom, and member of OHHLEP (2021-2023).
Dr. Osman Ahmed Dar	One Health Project Director, Chatham House and member of OHHLEP (2021-2023)

Dr. Ana Maria del Rio-Gonzalez	Associate professor, Milken Institute School of Public Health, The George Washington University, USA
Kathy Hessler	Asst. Dean Animal Law Director, Animal Legal Education Initiative The George Washington University Law School
Prof. Alice C. Hughes	School of Biological Sciences, University of Hong Kong
Dr. Mohammad Mushtuq Husain	Convenor, Janaudyog, Bangladesh
Dr. Natalie Khazaal	Associate professor, Georgia Tech, USA
Dr. Govinda Lienart	CEO, Three Monkeys Wildlife Conservancy, Vietnam
Gift Matinanga	Founder and President of Apostolic Voice University and Apostolic Voice Alliance
Ulrich Sylver M'Bani Madzou	Organisation Congo Prevention Secours OCPS
Dr. Serge Morand	CNRS and Director of HealthDEEP (Health, Disease Ecology, Environment and Policy), Bangkok, Thailand and member of OHHLEP (One Health High Level Expert Panel) (first term 2021-2023, and second term starting 2024)
DVM Prof. Riccardo Orusa	Senior Veterinary Officer, CERMAS Scientific Director National Reference Centre Wildlife Diseases, S.C. Aosta Valley, Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale del Piemonte, Liguria e Valle d'Aosta (ITALY)
Dr. Gabriel Parra-Henao	Health Research Center for the Tropics, Cooperative University of Colombia
Prof. Dr. Christina Pettan-Brewer	The International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife, Steering Committee Member, The N4H TAG One Health Group Member (UNEP), CABI One Health Journal Editorial Board, Beyond One Oceans Health (UN Oceans Decade), Associate Professor, School of Medicine, and Center for One Health Research, University of Washington, USA and One Health Brasil, OHLAIC, CYTED Latin America.
Dr. Marisa Peyre	Deputy Head of Integrated Health Research Unit in Cirad and Co-founder of the PREZODE initiative

Dr. Mahbubur Rahman	Assistant Professor (Epidemiology), Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), Bangladesh and General Secretary, One Health Bangladesh
Prof. Dr. Mahmudur Rahman	Former Director of the Institute of Epidemiology, Disease Control and Research (IEDCR), Dhaka, Bangladesh.
Dr. Jeyver Rodriguez	Department of Applied Ethics, Universidad Católica de Temuco, Chile. Member OHSS-One Health Commission. Member The International Alliance against Health Risks in Wildlife. Philosophers for Sustainability
Madelon Rusman	Independent Consultant on One Health and Illegal Wildlife Trade. Luangprabang, Lao P.D.R.
Dr. Claire J. Standley	Associate Research Professor, Center for Global Health Science and Security, Georgetown University, USA; Heidelberg Institute of Global Health, University of Heidelberg, Germany
Cleo Verkuil	Scientist, Stockholm Environment Institute, US and Visiting Research Fellow, Brooks McCormick Jr Animal Law and Policy Programme, Harvard Law School
Alexander von Hildebrand	Senior Advisor Health and the Environment
Dr. Kishor M. Wasan	Co-Founder and Co-Director Neglected Global Diseases Initiative at the University of British Columbia (NGDI UBC)