

15 March 2024

To the attention of the Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) responsible for drafting and negotiating a World Health Organization (WHO) convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response.

Dear INB Bureau and Member States,

On behalf of the undersigned 143 organisations and 54 experts, we are writing to emphasise the critical need for the WHO Pandemic Agreement to **prioritise pathogen spillover prevention (primary prevention¹) and address the drivers of zoonotic disease emergence, including wildlife trade and markets**. Following the eighth meeting of the INB in Geneva on 19 February - 1 March 2024, we are deeply concerned that the Agreement will not sufficiently address drivers of emergence and primary prevention, nor the increased risk for spillover and disease spread posed by wildlife trade and markets.

At the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, wildlife captured global attention as a central issue in discussions surrounding the origins and transmission of infectious diseases. Discussions highlighted the intricate interplay between human health and the natural world, emphasising the imperative of proactive measures to minimise the risk of future zoonotic spillovers and outbreaks. Significant attention was paid to the issues of live animal markets and the risks linked to wildlife trade, both domestic and international, legal and illegal, wild-caught and captive-bred.

However, as the pandemic progressed and attention shifted to other pressing matters, the discourse surrounding wildlife, as well as pathogen spillover and transmission, seemed to fade from public consciousness. Despite this shift in focus, the fundamental scientific understanding remains unchanged: an **estimated 1.7 million currently undiscovered viruses are thought to exist in mammal and avian hosts**; of these, 540,000-850,000 could infect humans². Striking examples of emerging viral diseases that had their origin in wildlife reservoirs include Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome (AIDS), Ebola Virus Disease, Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) and Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS), among others.³

Commercial wildlife trade and markets, particularly those in urban settings, continue to present a significant risk if they are not properly managed and regulated. Scientific research consistently underscores the role of wildlife trade, as well as other high-risk activities that increase the human-wildlife interface (e.g., deforestation, forest degradation, habitat encroachment) in facilitating the transmission of pathogens between animals, humans and other animals⁴.

¹ As defined by the One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP), see OHHLEP. (2021). Prevention of Zoonotic Spillover. From Relying on Response to Reducing the Risk at Source. <https://cdn.who.int/media/docs/default-source/one-health/ohhlep/ohhlep-prevention-of-zoonotic-spillover.pdf>

² IPBES. (2020). Workshop Report on Biodiversity and Pandemics. IPBES secretariat, Bonn, Germany. <https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.4147317>

³ Reperant, L. A., & Osterhaus, A. D. M. E. (2017). AIDS, Avian flu, SARS, MERS, Ebola, Zika... what next? Vaccine, 35(35 Pt A), 4470-4474. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.vaccine.2017.04.082>

⁴ Vora, N. M., et al. (2023). Interventions to reduce risk for pathogen spillover and early disease spread to prevent outbreaks, epidemics, and pandemics. Emerging Infectious Diseases, 29(3), 1-9. <https://doi.org/10.3201/eid2903.221079>

While international agreements, most notably the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), regulate international wildlife trade, the mandate of the Convention is to address the impact such trade may have on survival in the wild of the traded species. **CITES does not address the nexus between wildlife trade and the risk to human or animal health.** The gaps within the existing legal framework are increasingly apparent, and there is a need for a more comprehensive approach to regulating wildlife trade and markets to prevent the emergence of zoonotic diseases. CITES also does not address domestic use or trade, where the greatest risk of pathogen spillover lies and covers only a fraction of the species harbouring microorganisms able to become human pathogens with pandemic potential.

The close proximity and frequent interactions between humans and wildlife in commercial trade and markets create ideal conditions for the transmission of pathogens between animals and humans⁵. Not all species present the same risk: **three mammalian orders (rodents, bats and primates) have together been implicated as hosts for the majority (75.8%) of zoonotic viruses described to date, and these orders represent 72.7% of all terrestrial mammal species**⁶. Well-regulating, and in some cases restricting or prohibiting, the trade in certain species of wildlife, or prohibiting certain practices, must be an indispensable component of any effective pandemic prevention strategy.

Investing in primary prevention also presents substantial cost savings in contrast to the economic ramifications of large-scale outbreaks. Even conservative estimates, in fact, indicate that the cumulative costs of prevention efforts over a decade amount to a mere 2% of the expenses incurred during the COVID-19 pandemic⁷.

By adopting proactive measures to address the underlying drivers of zoonotic disease emergence, governments can commit to reducing the risk of future pandemics and safeguard the health and well-being of current and future generations. **A pandemic agreement without meaningful commitments to reduce the risk of pathogen spillover will indeed be short-sighted.**

We respectfully urge you to follow the scientific advice and directly address spillover prevention - including the role of wildlife trade and markets - within the WHO Pandemic Agreement. We stand ready to support and collaborate with you in this crucial endeavour.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Yours sincerely,







The undersigned organisations and experts

⁵ Hilderink, M.H., & de Winter, I. I. (2021). No need to beat around the bushmeat–The role of wildlife trade and conservation initiatives in the emergence of zoonotic diseases. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.heliyon.2021.e07692>

⁶ Johnson, C. K., et al. (2020). Global shifts in mammalian population trends reveal key predictors of virus spillover risk. *Proceedings of the Royal Society B*, 287(1924), 20192736. <https://doi.org/10.1098/rspb.2019.2736>

⁷ Andrew P. Dobson, et al. (2020). Ecology and economics for pandemic prevention. *Science*, 369(6502), 379-381. <https://doi.org/10.1126/science.abc3189>







Organisations

Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime	
Preventing Pandemics at the Source (Secretariat)	
ADM Capital Foundation	
FOUR PAWS	
World Federation for Animals (WFA)	
Vietnam One Health University Network (VOHUN)	



Wildlife Conservation Society	 <p>The logo for the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) features a stylized 'W' composed of four overlapping heart shapes in teal, green, and blue. Below the 'W' are the letters 'WCS' in a bold, black, sans-serif font.</p>
Born Free Foundation	 <p>The Born Free logo consists of a black line-art illustration of a lion's head on the left. To the right of the head, the words 'BORN FREE' are written in a bold, black, sans-serif font, with 'BORN' in a smaller size above 'FREE'.</p>
International Fund for Animal Welfare (IFAW)	 <p>The IFAW logo features the word 'ifaw' in a bold, black, lowercase sans-serif font. A small blue horizontal bar is positioned under the 'a'.</p>
Legal Atlas	 <p>The Legal Atlas logo features a blue circle containing the white lowercase letters 'la'. Below the circle, the word 'legalatlas' is written in a lowercase sans-serif font, with 'legal' in blue and 'atlas' in green.</p>
Indigenous Peoples Rights International	 <p>The IPRI logo features a colorful graphic on the left showing stylized mountains and the letters 'I P R I'. To the right, the text 'Indigenous Peoples Rights International' is written in a bold, black, sans-serif font. Below this, a green horizontal bar contains the tagline 'Championing Indigenous Peoples Rights' in white.</p>
Pro Wildlife	 <p>The Pro Wildlife logo features a black silhouette of a monkey's head on the left. To the right, the words 'PRO WILDLIFE' are written in a bold, sans-serif font, with 'PRO' in yellow and 'WILDLIFE' in black.</p>






<p>Apostolic Voice University</p>	
<p>Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research in the Forschungsverbund Berlin E.V.</p>	 <p>Leibniz Institute for Zoo and Wildlife Research IN THE FORSCHUNGSVERBUND BERLIN E.V.</p>
<p>David Shepherd Wildlife Foundation</p>	
<p>Fondation Franz Weber</p>	 <p>FONDATION FRANZ WEBER</p>
<p>Elephant Protection Initiative (EPI) Foundation</p>	
<p>Lega Anti Vivisezione (LAV)</p>	

<p>International Union of Biological Science (IUBS)</p>	
<p>One Health in Action Initiative</p>	
<p>World Animal Justice</p>	
<p>One Health Colombia OHCol / University of Cordoba</p>	
<p>Global Law Alliance for Animals and the Environment at Lewis & Clark Law School</p>	
<p>OSCAP Outraged South African Citizens Against Poaching</p>	

Wild Parrot Coalition	
Universidad San Francisco Xavier de Chuquisaca, Bolivia	
Ecoflox Foundation	
CODE ANIMAL	
Re:wild	
Cornell K. Lisa Yang Center for Wildlife Health	

Center for Biological Diversity	 <p>CENTER <i>for</i> BIOLOGICAL DIVERSITY <i>Because life is good.</i></p>
Animal Justice	 <p>ANIMAL JUSTICE</p>
Elephanatics	 <p>ELEPHANTICS</p>
Neglected Global Diseases Initiative (NGDI) University of British Columbia	<p>NGDI.ubc.ca Neglected Global Diseases Initiative</p>  <p><small>UBC a place of mind THE UNIVERSITY OF BRITISH COLUMBIA</small></p>
One Health/ Zoonotic Research and Surveillance , ACEGID, Redeemer's University	 <p>African Centre of Excellence for Genomics of Infectious Disease <small>Redeemer's University, Nigeria</small></p>
TEAL Climate	 <p>TEAL CLIMATE</p>

Tusk	
JEJAWI Advisors	
Animals Asia Foundation	
Artists who Love Animals and Nature	
Hong Kong Shark Foundation	

African malaika	
GM Mikoko Ujama	
Reach to Unreached (RUN), Bangladesh (Dist. of Barishal)	
Initiative for Agriculture and Rural Development in Mali (IDAR)	
Green REV Institute	

Next Generation One Health Philippines	
Planetary Health Philippines	
International Ranger Federation	
Ethical Seafood Research	
Voice4Lions	

Aaranyak	
K & B Wildlife protection	
The Fur-Bearers	
Wildcreatures	
Jane Goodall Institute Global	 Jane Goodall Institute
The ICCF Group	

Wild Tomorrow	
Freeland	
International Otter Survival Fund	
International Conservation & Biodiversity Team (ICBT)	
Liberia Chimpanzee Rescue & Protection and U.S. based Partners in Animal Protection & Conservation	

Animal Protection Denmark	ANIMAL PROTECTION DENMARK
NY4Whales	 The logo for NY4Whales.org, featuring the text "NY4WH" in blue, a small whale icon, and "LES.org" in blue, all enclosed in a black rectangular border.
World Animal Protection	 The logo for World Animal Protection, consisting of a black circle with a white center. Inside the circle, the words "WORLD ANIMAL PROTECTION" are written in black. There are two small orange dots on the circle's circumference.
Sustainable agriculture and environment for Iran	 The logo for Sustainable Agriculture and Environment for Iran, featuring a green map of Iran in the background. Overlaid on the map is the text "Sustainable Agriculture and Environment for IRAN" in green, white, and red.
Animal Wellness Action	animal wellness action
Center for a Humane Economy	CENTER —FOR A— HUMANE ECONOMY






Arba	
Animal Defenders International	
Philip Lymbery, Compassion in World Farming	
BiodiversityGR	
Merman Conservation Expeditions Ltd.	

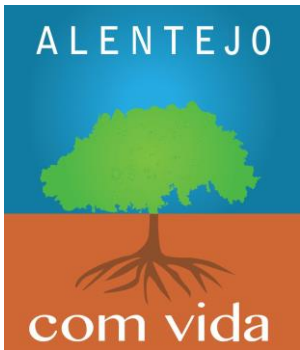
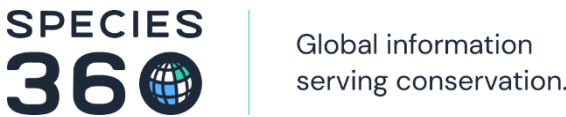



Brighter Green	
Somali Animal Welfare Society (SAWS)	
One Health Alliance Jordan (OHAJ)	
Britta Jaschinski & Keith Wilson	
Earth League International (ELI)	


Environment & Animal Society of Taiwan (EAST)	 <div> <div>台灣動物 社會研究會</div> <div>Environment & Animal Society of Taiwan</div> </div>
Blended Finance Taskforce no	 <div> <div>BLENDED FINANCE TASKFORCE</div> </div>
SEY Animal Welfare Finland	 <div>SUOMEN ELÄINSUOJELU</div>
ACTAsia	
Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden	 <div> <div>Kadoorie Farm & Botanic Garden</div> <div>嘉道理農場暨植物園</div> </div>
Law and Wildlife (L.a.W)	 <div> <div>Law and Wildlife</div> </div> <div>www.lawandwildlife.org</div>

Max Planck Institute of Animal Behavior, Konstanz, Germany	 <p>MAX PLANCK INSTITUTE OF ANIMAL BEHAVIOR</p>
Three Monkeys Wildlife Conservancy	 <p>THREE MONKEYS WILDLIFE CONSERVANCY</p>
Scanlon Advisory LLC	
PREZODE (Preventing Zoonotic Disease Emergence)	 <p>PREZODE Preventing zoonotic disease emergence</p>
PIC- Legal Centre for the Protection of Human Rights and the Environment	

Animal Friends Jogja (AFJ)	
NABU International	
People for Nature and Peace	
Fish Matter	
ADM Capital	

<p>International Coalition for Animal Protection</p>	
<p>One Health Brazil Network</p>	 <p>One Health Brasil</p>
<p>Hellenic Animal Welfare Federation</p>	
<p>Center for International Health, Ludwig Maximilians University</p>	
<p>Pan African Sanctuary Alliance</p>	

Alentejo com Vida	
Species360	
Neotropical Primate Conservation	
Animal Interfaith Alliance	
Yayasan Kanaditya Anjani Dharma Bali - Indonesia	

Conservation International	 <p>CONSERVATION INTERNATIONAL</p>
Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland	 <p>Wildlife Rehabilitation Ireland</p>
Humane Society International	 <p>HUMANE SOCIETY INTERNATIONAL</p>
Ippothesis Panhellenic Equine Welfare Society	 <p>ippothesis</p>
Uniremington - Faculty of Veterinary Medicine	 <p>UNIREMINGTON® CORPORACIÓN UNIVERSITARIA REMINGTON RES. 2661 MEN JUNIO 21 DE 1996</p>
CuriOdyssey	 <p>CuriOdyssey® SCIENCE PLAYGROUND & ZOO</p>

Sintesia Animalia Indonesia	
WildAid	
The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens	
Drasi gia tin agria zoi / Action for Wildlife	
Wildlife Conservation Medicine Foundation (Wild Spirit Fund)	

<p>AEGEAN WILDLIFE HOSPITAL</p>	
<p>Indonesia One Health University Network (INDOHUN)</p>	
<p>Animal People, Inc.</p>	
<p>Save Wild</p>	
<p>Know your Wildlife and the Environment Zambia Initiative Organization (KWEZI)</p>	

Ecological Alliance	
Eurogroup for Animals	
Animals Australia	
Animals International	
Animal Protection Agency	
African Pangolin Working Group	

Aquatic Life Institute



Solimar International



Toronto Zoo



Hidden Treasure Tours



Defenders of Wildlife



AnimalConcepts	 <p>Helping you care for animals and for yourself</p>
Oklahoma City Zoo and Botanical Garden	
Centre for One Health Education, Research & Development (COHERD), Indian Institute of Public Health Gandhinagar (IIPHG), India	
Zoo New England	
Dallas Zoo	

<p>Ayniy, Towards Planetary Wellbeing</p>	
<p>BirdLife International</p>	
<p>Observatorio Colombiano de Salud y Bienestar Animal, Universidad de La Salle</p>	
<p>ZooTampa at Lowry Park</p>	
<p>World Parrot Trust</p>	

Fauna & Flora	
The Living Desert Zoo and Gardens	

Experts

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Dr. Fabiola Quesada. Veterinarian, PhD Cand. CEO/Founder Wildlife Conservation

Medicine Foundation (Wild Spirit Fund). Spain - South Africa.
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