



Addressing the Blind Spot in Pandemic Preparedness

RECOMMENDATIONS TO DELEGATES IN ADVANCE OF THE SPECIAL SESSION OF THE WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY NOVEMBER 29 – DECEMBER 1, 2021

The World Health Assembly (WHA) Special Session convenes November 29-December 1, 2021, to consider development of an international instrument on pandemic preparedness.

The Secretariat of the [Preventing Pandemics at the Source](#) coalition has prepared this advisory note for delegates in advance of the Special Session. Our coalition unites leading public health, human rights, science, COVID survivors, environmental and Indigenous peoples' organizations.

We are deeply concerned that a make-or-break component is missing from pandemic preparedness planning. Plans focus on detection and containment, sending the message that global responsibility begins and ends with *stopping the spread* of disease. The remit of a new international *pandemic preparedness* instrument must be expanded to include upstream actions to reduce the risk of zoonotic spillover.

Stopping spillover at the source is true prevention, protecting front-line communities from initial infection and stopping the next pandemic *before it starts*. Investment in interventions to achieve true pandemic prevention ensure everybody is equally protected from the consequences of a new disease.

We urge delegates to the WHA Special Session to ensure that prevention at the source and reducing the risk of zoonotic spillover be included explicitly in the scope of the development of a new international instrument.

We further urge delegates to ensure that One Health and spillover prevention expertise is represented in the drafting committee or other group established following the Special Session.

Prevention at the source should be consistent with the [Berlin Principles on One Health](#), which recognize the interconnection of human, animal, and ecosystem health.

All pandemics, and most emerging infectious diseases, documented over the last century, were caused by viruses that spilled over from wildlife to humans.

Pandemics are increasing in frequency to such a degree that new infectious diseases will certainly emerge in the coming decade. The G20 High Level Independent Panel on Financing the Global Commons for Pandemic Preparedness and Response noted in its [report](#) this year that “The current pandemic was not a black swan event. Indeed, it may ultimately be seen as a dress rehearsal...There is every likelihood the next pandemic is coming within a decade or even in the



next year and could be even more profoundly damaging to human health and the global economy than COVID-19.”

There are cost-effective activities proven to result in steep reductions in spillover risk that must be funded and incorporated within the work program of any pandemic instrument. Such measures should include incentives for forest conservation (and disincentives for environmental degradation), provision of health care and jobs training in impoverished communities at the forest edge, and greater regulation of wildlife commerce, markets and consumption, and improved biosecurity in livestock management.

It is imperative that more equitable and effective approaches to pandemic prevention, preparedness and response be urgently developed and adopted globally. Current institutional mandates, scope, and siloed approaches should not impede more comprehensive and novel evidence-based approaches.

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For more information, please visit the [Preventing Pandemics at the Source](https://www.preventingpandemics.org/) website or contact Nigel Sizer, Executive Director, Preventing Pandemics at the Source at nigel.sizer@dalberg.com

The recommendations presented in this note are based on the findings of the independent [Report of the Scientific Taskforce on Preventing Pandemics](#) convened by the Center for Climate, Health and the Global Environment of the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health.

More details about specific interventions to reduce spillover risk can be found in the report, [Interventions to Prevent Pathogen Spillover and Curb Early Disease Spread among Domestic Animals and Humans](#), prepared by the Preventing Pandemics at the Source coalition.