

Five points for developing an instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response

We recognise that ensuring the health of animals is important for safeguarding the health of people and our planet, not only in terms of ensuring the availability of safe, sustainably produced, healthy food for all, but also in terms of preventing disease outbreaks and transmission both to other animals or to people.

According to the OIE, approximately **75% of emerging human infectious diseases have been zoonotic**, and scientists have estimated that around **72% of these originate in wildlife**. In recognising the pivotal role that animals play in disease transmission and pandemics, we believe that for the development of an instrument to be effective in preventing and countering pandemics it should include the following:

1. One Health as its core philosophy. Too often in the development of global health policy, animal and environmental considerations have been an afterthought. The experience not just with Covid, but other zoonotic disease outbreaks like West Nile, Ebola, MERS, SARs and existing endemic diseases like Rabies and Rift Valley Fever, show how this siloed approach leaves the world unprepared. If all three pillars of 'One Health' are not taken into account, policies will be reactive and not pre-emptive. One Health as defined by the [OHHLEP](#) should be ingrained in the instrument.

2. Increased investments in zoonotic disease prevention. The instrument needs to invest in tackling the source of 3 out of 4 emerging zoonoses – wild animal diseases moving to livestock and humans – and preventing spillover. This includes increased investment in the least developed countries – those most threatened by animal diseases and from where many viruses emanate. The instrument needs to address the increased financial investment required. Investments should be in preventative approaches – veterinary infrastructure, biosecurity, vaccination, access to diagnostics and digital monitoring tools, awareness-raising, vaccine banks, surveillance and early warning systems.

3. Focus on the biggest threats. First and foremost, the focus should be on preventing spread of pandemic threats from zoonotic diseases that threaten human, animal, and plant life. In addition, it should not be forgotten that the cause of much higher death and sickness are animal diseases that threaten food production. If left unchecked, diseases such as African Swine Fever, Avian Influenza, FMD, PPR and others; as well as plant diseases, have the scope to cause significant human and animal suffering and environmental damage. As pathogens of concern spread, more science-based health solutions and veterinary expertise are part of the integrated solutions needed.

4. Involve the solution providers and facilitate rapid action. The Covid crisis demonstrated the important role the private sector has to play in developing vaccines and treatments, conducting testing and more. The instrument must recognise the importance of involving private sector actors at an early stage. Any future systems should build on the private sector's R&D, manufacturing, and distribution capacity. More flexible regulatory systems that facilitate rapid responses, including better regulatory cooperation between countries for faster approvals are needed. Easier, more rapid access to pathogens and genetic sequence data should be facilitated through the instrument.

5. Focus on disciplined workability. There have been treaties which have had limited impact because they were too complex, prescriptive or unfocused. This instrument can avoid these pitfalls by ensuring that proposed systems are complementary (not duplicative) to existing frameworks, clear on roles and responsibilities, avoid overly prescriptive rules, and learn from mistakes and successes of the management of the Covid crisis.

It is important to remember that disease does not recognise borders, so any instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response must be global in nature with local specificities. The animal health sector both in Europe and worldwide recognises the importance of the work ahead in developing this instrument and is eager to support these efforts.

We remain available to contribute positively and actively.



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