

Recommendations on the Negotiating Text of the WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, advanced unedited version – 16 October 2023

The World Veterinary Association in collaboration with Action for Animal Health congratulates the Bureau on the inclusion of Articles 4 and 5 in the negotiating text.

We also welcome the expanded definition of One Health, and the inclusion of the need to maintain the capacity to carry out integrated surveillance (good animal disease surveillance needs an animal health workforce), as well as the acknowledgement that communities play a key role in disease surveillance (communities who live closely with wild and domestic animals will be the first to spot any change).

Member states are urged to keep both prevention and a One Health approach front and centre of the accord. Spill-over of pathogens from both wild and domestic animals to people is the predominant cause of emerging infectious diseases. The importance of prevention of spill-over cannot be overstated.

For example, the longer avian influenza circulates in wild and domestic birds, the more likely virus mutations or re-assortment will lead to potential human-to-human transmission ([A4AH, 2023](#)). The need to prevent, detect and respond to any potentially zoonotic disease outbreaks in animals in their earliest stage is paramount for maximum impact.

A One Health approach to the prevention of spill-over costs just one-third of the cost of managing a pandemic ([World Bank 2023](#)). It is an opportunity to pool resources between sectors for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, such as sharing lab capacity, human resources, cold chains, and existing vaccine production technologies.

Beginning to operationalise One Health does not have to be expensive; for instance integrated surveillance can be applied without the need for new expensive technologies.

Our specific textual recommendations relate to making the obligations around prevention and One Health as precise as possible, without compromising on conciseness.

Preamble

To reaffirm that the majority of emerging diseases with pandemic potential are zoonotic in nature, and to spell out the potential drivers, we suggest to add two clauses:

14. Reaffirming that zoonotic spillover of pathogens from animals to people is recognised as the predominant cause of emerging infectious diseases

15. Reiterating that the drivers of zoonotic spillover include but are not limited to food systems and farming practices, trade of wild animals, climate change, land-use change, antimicrobial resistance and desertification

Chapter 1, article 1

The draft text uses several different terms to describe 'surveillance'. We recommend consistency using 'integrated surveillance' and including a definition:

Integrated surveillance means the systematic and timely collection, validation, analysis, interpretation and dissemination of data related to known and unknown pathogens, including surveillance of the drivers of disease emergence – collected from and shared across human, animal and environmental sources at local, national and international level – to inform cross sectoral actions to prevent, prepare for, respond and recover from zoonotic and anti-microbial resistance related events.

[Action for Animal Health's report](#) (p.26, 27, 28, 36, 42) shows that data sharing is a major challenge across human health, animal health and environmental sectors, and governance levels within a country. A definition of integrated surveillance will better spell-out the obligations of parties to the accord.

We recommend including the One Health High Level Expert Panel's definition of prevention, covering prevention of spill-over:

Primary Prevention/Prevention of pathogen spill-over: includes addressing the drivers of disease emergence, namely ecological, meteorological, and anthropogenic factors and activities that increase spillover risk, in order to reduce the risk of human infection. It is informed by, among other actions, biosurveillance in domestic and wild animals, people and the environment, understanding pathogen infection dynamics, and implementing intervention activities

Chapter 2, article 4

It is unclear why this article is titled "Pandemic prevention and public health surveillance". We recommend to title it "pandemic prevention" or "Prevention of pathogen spill-over" only.

Veterinary laboratories are essential to disease surveillance, detection and control ([WOAH 2023](#)). They can also process human samples and therefore are useful for pooling resources during the preparation and response phase of a pandemic. We suggest the following revision:

3. The Parties shall cooperate with the support of the WHO Secretariat [**and relevant institutions**] to strengthen and maintain [**veterinary and**] public health laboratory and diagnostic capacities, especially with respect to the capacity to perform genetic sequencing, data science to assess the risks of detected pathogens and to safely handle samples containing pathogens, and the use of related digital tools.

As the IHR does not cover animal health or prevention of spill-over, we suggest to rewording the following:

4. Each Party shall develop, strengthen, implement, periodically update and review comprehensive multisectoral national prevention and surveillance plans, that are consistent with and supportive of effective implementation of the International Health Regulations [**and other relevant instruments**]. To this end, each Party shall, in accordance with its capabilities:

To ensure the optimisation of animal health in a fashion that is positive for an animal's welfare, as per the One Health definition, we suggest the following revision:

4(e) strengthen [**animal health**] by implementing preventive measures, [**such as vaccination, biosecurity and access to animal health services for communities**] and monitor and mitigate environmental factors associated with the risk of zoonotic disease spill-over and spill-back;

We recommend moving 4(g) to Article 5. Or as a minimum move the text *in accordance with the national context, develop and implement a national One Health action plan that includes an antimicrobial resistance component* to Article 5 as national plans should cover the full PPR cycle, not only prevention.

Chapter 2, article 5

To maintain emphasis on prevention at source, we suggest:

5. The Parties commit to develop, within the framework of relevant institutions, international norms and guidelines to prevent zoonoses [**in animals and people**]

To maintain the emphasis on One Health, we suggest the following amendments:

7. The Parties shall, in line with Article 16, develop and implement or strengthen, as appropriate, bilateral, regional, subregional and other multilateral channels to enhance financial and technical support, assistance and cooperation, in particular to developing

countries to strengthen **[integrated]** surveillance systems and **[public health and veterinary]** laboratory capacity [to promote and implement] the One Health approach at the national level

Add the following clause, adapted from Article (4g):

In accordance with the national context, develop and implement a national One Health action plan **[for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response]** that includes an antimicrobial resistance component

Chapter 2, article 6

There are critical points of spill-over at the human-animal-environment interface that should be acknowledged. We suggest consistently using the term 'integrated surveillance' throughout the text. We suggest the following:

(2c) **[integrated]** surveillance **[including but not limited to at critical points such as live animal markets and border crossings]**, outbreak detection, investigation and control, through interoperable early warning and alert systems, and timely notification;

We suggest to move (d) to Article 4 as this clause is relevant to prevention and will help to emphasise that Article 4 is about prevention at source.

Chapter 2, articles 16 and 17

Both articles should reference One Health, as well as the Quadripartite. We suggest:

(Article 16, 1) The Parties shall collaborate and cooperate with competent international and regional intergovernmental organisations and other bodies, **[such as the Quadripartite]**, as well as among themselves....

(Article 17, 4) Each Party shall develop, in accordance with its national context, comprehensive national **[One Health]** pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response plans pre-, post- and inter-pandemic...

Final remarks

We urge wealthier countries to support less wealthy countries to build their pandemic prevention capacity through ODA and contributions to the World Bank Pandemic Fund.

We strongly recommend that the INB encourages member states and their representatives to conduct cross-ministry and civil society consultations - to reflect human, animal and environmental sectors - at national level to inform their positions on the content of the instrument.

Contact

Action for Animal Health: Ellie Parravani, ellie.parravani@thebrooke.org

World Veterinary Association: Susanna Sternberg Lewerin, Susanna.Sternberg-Lewerin@slu.se

The World Veterinary Association represents the global veterinary profession. It is the umbrella organisation for veterinary associations across the world. It has 'official relations' status with WHO.

Action for Animal Health is a coalition of 13 civil society organisations and research institutions with technical expertise in animal health and One Health. We are an Annex E partner organisation.