



STATEMENT FROM THE SECRETARIAT OF PREVENTING PANDEMICS AT THE SOURCE
TO MARK WORLD HEALTH DAY, APRIL 7, 2022

April 7 is World Health Day. The World Health Organization has declared that the theme this year is “[Our planet, our health](#)”. The Executive Director of [Preventing Pandemics at the Source](#), Dr. Nigel Sizer, has issued the following statement:

“We enthusiastically welcome the theme of World Health Day this year: ‘Our planet, our health’. Major UN bodies, including the [World Health Organization](#) and the [Secretariat of the Convention on Biological Diversity](#), have published statements highlighting the impacts on human health of climate change and pollution.

“It is remarkable, however, that these agencies chose not to mention other important links between the health of ecosystems, wildlife, and people.

“We are amid yet another surge in cases in the ongoing pandemic. Around [20 million lives](#) have likely been lost to COVID-19 globally, with thousands more being added, tragically, each day.

“All viral pandemics of the last century are zoonotic in origin, initiated by the spillover of viruses primarily from wildlife to humans directly or via livestock. Yet the UN statements mention nothing about the urgent action needed to prevent future viral pandemics.

“We see the same omission made by many global leaders. Although there are notable exceptions, current international and domestic efforts to address the risks of future pandemics largely focus on important actions to prepare for and rapidly respond to outbreaks to contain their spread, but fundamentally ignore more cost-effective and equitable policies and interventions to reduce the risk of pathogen spillover at the source.

“If we are to truly recognize World Health Day, we call on all stakeholders, including governments and multilateral agencies and entities, to commit to taking all necessary actions to prevent the next pandemic of zoonotic origin, *before* it starts.

“[WHO stresses](#) how important it is to ‘focus global attention on urgent actions needed to keep humans and the planet healthy,’ and yet one of the most urgent actions needed – the reduction of spillover - is not mentioned at all. Ignoring this issue will not make it go away.

“The risk of future pandemics can be reduced through the following **five priority actions**:

- ***Shut down or strictly regulate wildlife trade and markets*** that risk contributing to zoonotic spillover, particularly commercial trade in birds and mammals for food, pets, and medicine, much of which is for the luxury market. This should be done while respecting the rights, culture, and nutritional needs of Indigenous Peoples and local communities.



- ***Stop deforestation and forest degradation***, especially in tropical and subtropical forests through incentives and penalties for forest protection as sustained by the Government of Brazil that reduced deforestation by 80% between 2004 and 2012. Key related steps needed are restricting the import of agricultural commodities derived from deforestation and protecting Indigenous Peoples' land rights and their self-governance.
- ***Provide better healthcare and alternative livelihoods to communities*** living close to wildlife in tropical regions.
- ***Support improved livestock health, strengthen veterinary care and biosecurity in animal husbandry***, from smallholdings to commercial scale production.
- ***Enhance surveillance for zoonotic viruses*** at interfaces between humans, domestic animals, and wildlife, particularly in spillover hotspots.

“These are the kinds of vital measures and policy leadership needed to truly protect our health while also protecting our planet. Today, we once again call on global leaders to include prevention of spillover as a key element of their policy efforts and public communications.”