

THE POST-2020 GLOBAL BIODIVERSITY FRAMEWORK MUST INCLUDE PROVISIONS TO REDUCE THE RISK OF FUTURE PANDEMICS OF ZONOTIC ORIGIN

Advisory note to Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity, prepared by the Coalition for Preventing Pandemics at the Source ahead of the 5th meeting of the Open-Ended Working Group on the Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework in Montreal on December 3-5, 2022

The Post-2020 Global Biodiversity Framework (GBF) provides a once-in-a-decade opportunity to help reduce the risk of future pandemics of zoonotic origin through a strengthened global commitment to the conservation and sustainable use of biodiversity. All viral pandemics over the last century, most likely including COVID-19, were caused by pathogens that spilled over from animals, particularly wildlife, to humans. Effective conservation measures and controls, especially when led by governments, on practices involving wildlife can significantly and cost-effectively¹ reduce the risk of pathogen spillover and spillback² on a global scale. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to reap huge costs in terms of loss of life and economic devastation, the world can no longer afford to ignore links between the degradation of nature and health impacts.

The Coalition for Preventing Pandemics at the Source³ (PPATS) – a group of leading organizations focused on conservation, public health, human rights, science, health justice and Indigenous rights – is concerned that this vital One Health⁴ component will not be explicitly included in the GBF. Relevant language was featured in target 5 of the draft Framework but the Informal Group who met in September has suggested to remove it from the streamlined text⁵. This revision is remarkable considering the world is still struggling to contain COVID-19 precisely three years after the pathogen first began to infect humans, and with over a thousand human fatalities continuing every single day.

Although One Health may be mentioned in passing in cross-cutting sections, without specific directives in the Targets this will be functionally meaningless. The language in Target 5 on preventing pathogen spillover resulting from wildlife exploitation, trade, and use is essential to reduce threats to wildlife and biodiversity. It is also vital in order to reduce threats to humans and our economic systems that underpin the implementation of the CBD.

We urge Parties to the CBD to explicitly include reducing the risk of pathogen spillover in target 5 of the Global Biodiversity Framework. PPATS Coalition members will be available in Montréal to discuss this recommendation directly with Parties.

¹ <https://www.science.org/doi/10.1126/sciadv.abl4183>

² The term spillback refers to transmission of zoonotic pathogens from humans to animals

³ <https://www.preventingfuturepandemics.org/>

⁴ <https://wedocs.unep.org/bitstream/handle/20.500.11822/37600/JTFOWU.pdf>

⁵ <https://www.cbd.int/doc/c/aa0c/3d23/795b0885b1aeec517eee0cfa/post2020-om-2022-01-02-en.pdf>

Yellow highlight indicates text that we recommend retaining. The blue text is our suggested streamlined text, with additional suggested text in bold.

Target 5

OEWG-4 (Nairobi Text, June '22): [Prevent overexploitation by ensuring] / [Ensure] that [any] / [the] [harvesting] / [exploitation], [[captive] breeding] / [farming], trade and use of terrestrial, [and aquatic] / [[freshwater] / [inland water] and marine and coastal], wild [animal and plant] species[, including eggs, fries, parts and derivatives], is sustainable [and legal] [and safe for target and non-target species] [effectively regulated] [and traceable], [minimizing impacts on non-target species and ecosystems] [without adverse effects on the populations of species], [and safe for [[human], [animal and plant]] health] / [and poses no risks of pathogen spillover to humans, wildlife or other animals] [and for all living beings on mother Earth]], [and prevent and eliminate biopiracy and other forms of illegal access to and transfer of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge], while [respecting] / [protecting] customary [rights] and sustainable use [of IPLCs] [and preventing pathogen spillover], [applies [ecosystem-based approaches] / [the ecosystem approach] to management] [and creating the conditions for the use and provision of benefits for IPLCs] [and take urgent action to address both demand and supply of illegal wildlife products].

Suggested streamlined text: Ensure that the exploitation, trade, and use of wild species is sustainable, legal, effectively regulated and enforced and poses no significant risk of pathogen spillover to humans, wildlife, or other animals, while respecting the rights of Indigenous Peoples and Local Communities.

Informal Group proposal (September '22): [Prevent overexploitation by ensuring] / [Ensure] that harvesting trade and use of wild species is sustainable and legal, minimizing impacts on non-target species and ecosystems, [and prevent and eliminate biopiracy and other forms of illegal access to and transfer of genetic resources and associated traditional knowledge], while respecting customary sustainable use.

Note: The Informal Group proposal is NOT a good basis for the negotiations at OEWG-5. Target 5 was not discussed in Nairobi, and the Informal Group proposed significant changes to its scope that would conflict with many views expressed by Parties at OEWG-3 in Geneva. We propose working from the OEWG-4 text.

December 1st, 2022.