

Preventing Pandemics at the Source: A Call to Action – High Level Meeting

"Closing the gaps in pandemic prevention, preparedness and response: Our Urgent and Collective Responsibility"

Excellencies, colleagues, distinguished delegates,

The world cannot afford to remain trapped in a cycle of crisis and response. The question before us is whether we will continue reacting to outbreaks after they occur, or act to prevent them before they begin.

Science is clear: most emerging infectious diseases originate at the interface of humans, animals, and ecosystems. This is why the PREZODE vision and the One Health approach are so important. Preventing pandemics at their source requires us to recognize that human health, animal health, ecosystems health in a broad environment are inseparably linked.

Effective pandemic prevention depends not only on science and institutions, but also on people, science and surveillance alone are not enough. There is one essential element that must be at the center of all our efforts: the direct and fair participation of local stakeholders and communities in the development of solutions and in the sharing of the various benefits arising from international efforts. Indigenous Peoples, local communities, farmers, pastoralists, and other traditional knowledge holders are at the frontline to observe changes in animal health, ecosystems, and environmental conditions. Their knowledge, cultures, and ways of managing their territories are invaluable. Pandemic prevention cannot be imposed from above; it must be built together, respecting and preserving the diversity of knowledge systems that exist across humanity and must ensure that the most vulnerable populations are the ones that benefit most from the efforts made at all levels.

Through PREZODE, countries are already working together to translate these principles into action. For example, multidisciplinary teams in **Madagascar, Cameroon, Gabon, Central Africa, Guinea, Cambodia, and Latin America countries**, are strengthening community-based surveillance, integrating animal, human and environmental data, and co-designing prevention strategies with local stakeholders in areas at risk of zoonotic emergence.

Today, species are disappearing, ecosystems are being degraded, and the ecological balance that protects us is being lost. As nature for natural or anthropocentric causes, the risks of disease emergence increase. Pandemic prevention through a One Health approach is therefore not only a health priority. It is an environmental priority, a development priority, an economical investment priority, and a global equity priority at a time when inequalities among peoples at all levels have never been more pronounced.

The time is now. The focus is Health!!

Let us move from immediate reaction to enhanced prevention.

Let us invest in Global One Health and unite the regions and countries.

Let us protect biodiversity and the ecosystems that still exist to sustain all life.

Let's support vulnerable countries and bring more science into the policy field.

And let us collaborate more as committed global citizens to prevent the next pandemic before it begins. The cost of inaction will be measured not only in lives lost, but in species lost, ecosystems lost, and opportunities lost for future generations.

That is why preventing pandemics at their source is not only a global health imperative. It is an investment in sustainable development, biodiversity, resilience, and global stability. The knowledge, tools and partnerships already exist. What is needed now is the political will and sustained investment to act before the next crisis emerges. Let us make prevention the first line of defense for a healthier, safer, and more equitable future.

Thank you.

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