

What international policy initiatives should be created for the prevention of infectious diseases of zoonotic origin?

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1. SUMMARY

1. In the context of the scientific assessments that have already been launched at IPBES (Intergovernmental Science-Policy Platform on Biodiversity and Ecosystem Services) and WHO (World Health Organization), governments could intervene in the design of an independent high-level panel envisaged by WHO to ensure that it is constituted and mandated with all the necessary means to fulfil its mission, and that it has a full guarantee of independence.

2. The High-Level Political Forum (HLPF) set up under the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development can help set the stage and prepare for initiative(s) that will follow. The HLPF's Ministerial Declaration could call on Member States and international institutions to strengthen international environmental law and foster the efficacy of approaches such as One Health, or to focus on production and consumption issues related to animal products.

3. An extraordinary summit on how to exit the crisis, at a Heads of State level in an "enlarged G20" format, could provide a moment of international political response in the short term. The agenda could facilitate the bringing together of themes like public health, biodiversity, climate, and sectoral issues such as agri-food systems and infrastructure (e.g. transport), and to committing to shared guidelines for national recovery plans.

4. States could push for the UN General Assembly in September 2020, ahead of COP 15 of the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), to adopt a resolution to organize the joint work of UN agencies and convention secretariats on zoonoses and their links to biodiversity and environmental degradation. Such a resolution could pave the way for legal developments, such as considering the desirability of a new UN convention that addresses all aspects of the pandemic.

5. An initiative could be launched on reducing zoonotic risks related to livestock farming, e.g. in the framework of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO)/World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) or the EU-China summit (China having adopted an objective in 2016 to reduce meat consumption following the Paris Climate Agreement).

2. THREE POSSIBLE INTERVENTION TYPES, AND THE SCOPE OF THIS NOTE

The focus here is on initiatives that governments could take to address the need for international action to reduce the infectious disease-related risks, within the framework of more global sustainable development policies and environmental policies in particular.

Responding to this challenge firstly implies considering a certain amount of reorganization of international action, and secondly that biodiversity conservation and animal health should finally be regarded as of equal importance to sanitary issues, which must in particular raise questions on the consumption and production of animal products on a global scale.

The objective is therefore twofold: 1) regarding assessments, to ensure that they take account of the full scope of the issues at stake, from human health to animal health and biodiversity, 2) regarding initiatives for preventive action, to ensure that systemic approaches such as One Health are strengthened and genuinely implemented, which requires an institutional positioning that goes beyond sectoral agencies (WHO, OIE, FAO, UNEP, etc.), possibly under the aegis of the 2030 Agenda, while guaranteeing its effectiveness.

We structured this analysis around upcoming "political moments" that have been planned within the framework of existing institutions and processes, in chronological order of their appearance on the agenda: the ongoing assessment