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## **INB9 – World Health Organization**

### **Prevention is better than cure: Uphold and Strengthen One Health in the Pandemic Agreement**

As Erasmus said “Prevention is better than cure”. COVID-19 is not an exception to this rule yet the focus of negotiation has been on how to *respond* to the next pandemic, not how to *prevent* it. As Tom Friedman noted in an opinion in the New York Times, if a nuclear missile test had gone awry in December 2019 that sent a cloud of radioactivity around the world causing millions of deaths and trillions of dollars of losses, what would we be prioritizing: “a new global safety regime to try to make sure it never happened again”. Prevention must therefore be the priority.

Individual State efforts aimed at prevention are irrelevant as diseases do not respect national boundaries. The only credible solution is a binding international instrument and the only binding international instrument under discussion at the present time is the Pandemic Agreement. It is therefore not an exaggeration to state that this Agreement is the one chance humanity has to look at the best science and use it to minimize the risk of a future deadly zoonotic spillover. Millions of lives may depend upon it. The moral burden on negotiators is extreme.

The best science in this area is not in dispute. The interdependent nature of animal health, environmental health and human health is well recognized and embraced in the “One Health” approach. If we don’t address those interfaces we are burying our heads in the sand and welcoming the next spillover. We all know that human development is destroying the natural barriers that guard against such spillovers. A combination of population growth, encroachment on wild animal habitat, deforestation, and climate change results in ever increasing contact between wild animals acting as viral hosts or vectors and humans or domesticated animals. The One Health framework offers a springboard for action to address the causes and effects of such interactions. The inclusion of a robust One Health provision in the Pandemic Agreement such as the current Article 5 is therefore essential. ICFAP is gravely concerned that efforts are underway to undermine or weaken the reference to One Health in the Pandemic Agreement. One Health should not be used as a political negotiating pawn. The current draft leaves open all options to an equitable approach to finance One Health commitments, and that can and should be the object of later discussions. But to exclude proper reference to One Health as a key response to spillover risk is to ignore best science and play with human lives. If proper reference to One Health is ignored, humanity will have missed its greatest opportunity to prevent pandemics.

ICFAP firmly believes that standards must be put in place to regulate the interface between human interactions, animals, and the environment as a means to prevent future pandemics through a robust prevention and One Health provision and urges negotiators not to water down Articles 4 or 5 of the current draft. Be on the right side of history and humanity and support a robust One Health provision.