



STATEMENT: G7 poised to neglect critical pandemic prevention measures, risking COVID sequel while the first act is still playing

New York (June 11, 2021) – Today through Sunday, the G7 heads of state, hosted by UK Prime Minister Boris Johnson, are meeting with a declared intention of making progress on COVID-19 response and efforts to build back better from the pandemic, as well as on climate change.

Following is a statement from Dr. Nigel Sizer, Executive Director of the [Preventing Pandemics at the Source initiative](#) which brings together leading global public health, environmental, and COVID victims and survivors organizations.

“The G7 leaders, the most powerful group of people in the world, hosted by Boris Johnson, are failing to grasp the imperative to step up and address the most urgent threats facing humankind.

“All of the pandemics in the last century, including HIV, Ebola, SARS, and COVID-19, as well as dozens of other emerging infectious diseases, are zoonotic in origin and we know that at least 6 of the 7 are the result of spillover of viruses from animals into people. The risk of spillover grows dramatically as people clear more tropical forests and trade live wildlife for pets and consumption. Preventing pandemics at the source—by protecting and managing tropical forests, biodiversity, and wildlife—is vital to any effort to build back better.

“Protecting and restoring tropical forests, which store enormous amounts of carbon, mitigates climate change. Furthermore, these forests are vital for helping regulate global rainfall patterns necessary for agricultural stability and as storehouses of much of the planet’s biological diversity, including species key to future pharmaceutical breakthroughs and other medical advances. Thousands of traditional and Indigenous communities also depend on tropical forests for their direct survival.”

Professor Tom Lovejoy, one of the foremost experts on climate change and tropical ecology and advisor to the Preventing Pandemics at the Source initiative, added this statement:

“It is more vital than ever that global leaders connect the dots between pandemic prevention, combatting climate change and protecting biodiversity. Conserving tropical forests and wildlife and respecting the rights of the local communities are the best way to quickly advance these goals. The G7 should quickly marshal the financial resources to lead such an effort. Prevention represents a tiny cost compared to those levied by a pandemic. A mere \$20 billion per year would be sufficient to achieve major improvements in public health, vaccines for the many of the most vulnerable to COVID-19, and spillover prevention at the source: a modest investment to protect us all from future pandemics while making a major contribution to the fight against climate change.”