



February 10, 2021

Hon. Nancy Pelosi, Speaker, United States House of Representatives

Hon. Kevin McCarthy, Minority Leader, United States House of Representatives

Hon. Chuck Schumer, Majority Leader, United States Senate

Hon. Mitch McConnell, Minority Leader, United States Senate

Dear Madam Speaker, Mr. Minority Leader, Mr. Majority Leader, Mr. Minority Leader,

Zoonotic spillover - the transmission of novel pathogens, from animals to humans - is the origin of most emerging infectious diseases, including COVID-19. The rate of zoonotic disease outbreaks is rapidly increasing, driven by human activities that increase interactions between wildlife, livestock, and people. Land use change, particularly the clearing, degradation, and fragmentation of tropical forests within emerging disease hotspots, as well as wildlife trade, and intensive livestock production are of greatest concern. With six times more outbreaks in 2010 than 1980, the next million-death pandemic is more likely to happen in the next decade than in the next century and will almost certainly be the result of another zoonotic spillover.

We applaud the measures outlined in President Biden's National Security Directive 1 for new bilateral and multilateral efforts to strengthen the international COVID-19 response. We note, however, that these measures are largely directed at *pandemic response and containment* (surveillance and preparedness measures to stop an outbreak from spreading).

We thank the Congress for restoring modest amounts of U.S. bilateral and multilateral assistance in tropical countries for zoonotic spillover surveillance, the management of sustainable landscapes, conserving the ecological integrity of intact forests, and enforcing wildlife trade policies in the FY21 Consolidated Appropriations Act.

The need remains for far more leadership and investment regarding pandemic prevention. We can stop future pandemics at the source by reducing spillover of pathogens from animals to humans. If COVID-19 has made one thing clear, it is that the cost of even the boldest initiative to prevent future pandemics is orders of magnitude less than the price we pay once a pandemic occurs.

Our coalition of leading U.S.-based, global public health and environmental organizations recommends scaling up international efforts to prevent zoonotic spillover through increased funding to mainstream One Health. Such programs strengthen local human and animal health systems and implement risk reduction activities at points of human-animal contact. They include reducing forest clearing and degradation, preventing commercial wildlife trade that risks contributing to zoonotic spillover, strictly monitoring and reducing disease risk from wildlife markets, improving biosecurity on farms in emerging disease hotspots, and ensuring the health systems of poor countries and local communities are equipped to stop outbreaks.

As Congress and the Biden Administration draft the emergency COVID-19 package, ***we ask that you ensure a significant level of new funds is directed to support programs and activities that prevent pandemics at the source*** through development assistance programs focused on One Health, forest



conservation, and wildlife trade, including to help support frontline and Indigenous communities in zoonotic spillover hotspots.

We are also calling on the Administration to lead an effort to create a Global Fund for Pandemic Prevention, with an initial \$2.5 billion commitment as leverage to recruit other major donors to this effort. Such a Fund could be announced as part of the action agenda at the Group of Seven hosted this year by the UK and would galvanize greater international action on pandemic prevention while also ensuring other nations share the cost.

These investments will also help expand successful approaches providing healthcare and job training that have achieved impressive impacts for frontline communities. These impacts include a more than 90 percent reduction in the number of families engaged in unsustainable logging, health benefits (including a two thirds reduction in infant mortality) and preventing carbon emissions worth more than 10 times the cost of the program through reduced deforestation. Expanding these local and community-based solutions will reduce the risks of zoonotic spillover and help stop the next pandemic before it starts.

The United States and other countries should also use their diplomatic, trade and purchasing power to influence countries and companies to reduce deforestation and forest degradation, adopt wildlife policies favorable to pandemic prevention, and ensure that impoverished countries have access to the assistance they need to conserve and protect natural resources, provide healthcare and livelihood alternatives for local communities, and secure planetary health.

‘Building back better’ also means enhancing global health security, which must include U.S. leadership and investments to prevent pandemics at the source. Our coalition stands ready to assist in these efforts and urges Congress to ensure that significant new international funding is available as part of the federal response to COVID-19.

Respectfully,

Coalition to Prevent Pandemics at the Source (in alphabetical order):

Conservation International; Dalberg Catalyst; EcoHealth Alliance; Health In Harmony; R2H Action [Right to Health]; Rainforest Alliance; The Nature Conservancy (TNC); Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS); World Resources Institute (WRI); World Wildlife Fund (WWF)

Advisors to the Coalition:

Dr. Aaron Bernstein, Interim Director, Harvard Chan C-CHANGE; Pediatric Hospitalist, Boston Children’s Hospital

Melinda Kimble, Professor, Syracuse University

Dr. Thomas Lovejoy, Professor, George Mason University

Also signed by:

Animal Defenders International

If Not Us Then Who?

International Fund for Animal Welfare

Marked by COVID, leading U.S. grassroots organization of families who lost loved ones to COVID-19

Mighty Earth



Copied to:

Chairwoman Rosa DeLauro, House Committee on Appropriations

Ranking Member Kay Granger, House Committee on Appropriations

Chairman Patrick Leahy, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Ranking Member Richard Shelby, Senate Committee on Appropriations

Chairwoman Barbara Lee, House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations

Ranking Member Hal Rogers, House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations

Ranking Member Lindsay Graham, Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations

Chairman Gregory Meeks, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Ranking Member Michael McCaul, House Committee on Foreign Affairs

Chairman Robert Menendez, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations

Ranking Member James E. Risch, Senate Committee on Foreign Relations