**Transcript of Preventing Pandemics at the Source’s intervention at the listening session on the pandemic accord hosted by the U.S. government**

## Prepared March 16th, 2023

I am representing Preventing Pandemics at the Source. We are a coalition of 20 organizations focused on public health, health justice, animal welfare, conservation, and Indigenous Rights.

We welcome the inclusion in the zero draft of language on One Health and on addressing the drivers of pathogen spillover from animals to humans. Research shows that spillover is the major source of pandemic risk. Scientists had warned for decades of the risk of a pandemic of zoonotic origin, like COVID-19. We ignored them, with devastating consequences. We also know that the frequency and severity of outbreaks of zoonotic origin is increasing. We have a collective responsibility to finally heed scientists’ warnings and act to prevent pandemics at the source, at the point of spillover.

However, the zero draft is still strongly focused on actions to contain and respond to outbreaks. These actions are vital but they must be complemented by equally detailed and comprehensive provisions to reduce spillover risk at the human-animal-environment interface. These provisions must explicitly commit governments to address the evidence-based drivers of spillover risk. These include land-use change, the loss, fragmentation, and degradation of ecosystems, commercial wildlife trade and markets and weak animal health systems and management. Research shows that, by addressing these drivers, we can significantly reduce the risk of spillover, with massive return on investment.

Actions to reduce spillover risk are also key to achieving global health equity. Focusing only on containing and responding to outbreaks accepts the illness and deaths of mostly Indigenous and vulnerable populations living in emerging infectious diseases hotspots. Spillover prevention protects everyone equally from infection in the first place.

The One Health approach must be recognized as integral to pandemic prevention. As such, the instrument must require member states to include actions to reduce spillover risk in their national plans for pandemic prevention, preparedness and response. The role of the Quadripartite must also be formalized to reflect the multilateral approach needed to effectively prevent future pandemics. The participation of relevant One Health stakeholders such as FAO, UNEP and WOAH is critical to achieve the instrument’s objectives.

The international instrument must move beyond the current siloed approach to pandemic prevention and embrace the comprehensive approach necessary to truly break the cycle of panic and neglect. Thank you!