



WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Topic 1: The Question of Establishing a Unified Health Framework in
Order to Prevent Zoonotic Diseases

Committee overview

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the specialized agency of the United Nations responsible for international public health. Its primary purpose is to direct and coordinate global health efforts, prevent and respond to disease outbreaks, establish international medical standards, and support member states in strengthening their healthcare systems. WHO plays a critical role in providing scientific guidance, coordinating emergency responses, and promoting equitable access to healthcare worldwide.

Background on the topic

Zoonotic diseases are infectious diseases that are transmitted from animals to humans. Over 60% of emerging infectious diseases originate from animals, making zoonoses one of the most significant threats to global health. Notable examples include COVID 19, Ebola, SARS, MERS, and Avian Influenza.

The rise in zoonotic disease transmission is closely linked to human activities such as deforestation, climate change, wildlife trade, urban expansion, and intensive livestock farming. These activities increase contact between humans, animals, and disrupted ecosystems. Thus creating ideal conditions for disease spillover.

In response the international community has promoted the One Health approach, which recognizes the interconnection between human health, animal health, and environmental health. A unified health framework would institutionalize this approach by integrating surveillance systems, data sharing mechanisms, and policy coordination across these sectors. Currently, implementation remains uneven due to funding gaps, lack of coordination, and differing national capacities.

Preventing zoonotic diseases at their source is significantly more cost effective than responding to full-scale outbreaks or pandemics, making this topic a priority for long-term global health security.

Key terms and definitions

Suez Canal: Sea-level waterway running north-south across the Isthmus of Suez in Egypt, connecting the Mediterranean and Red Sea.

Nationalisation: The transfer of a major branch of industry or commerce from private to state ownership or control.

Colonialism: The policy or practice of acquiring full or partial political control over another country, occupying it with settlers, and exploiting it economically.

Sovereignty: The authority of a state to govern itself or another state.

Cold War: Ongoing political rivalry between the United States and the Soviet Union and their respective allies that developed after World War II.

Relevant UN bodies and resolutions

UN Bodies

- **The Quadripartite Alliance** - Which includes the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the UN Environment Programme (UNEP), and the World Organization for Animal Health (WOAH).

Conventions/Treaties

- **Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)** - helps regulate wildlife markets.
- **The One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022–2026)** - established by the Quadripartite, to create a framework to integrate systems and capacity so that collective health threats are prevented.

Major actors and their relevance

Countries

- **Brazil** - Brazil is home to the majority of the Amazon, deforestation and habitat destruction put the population at risk of zoonotic disease spillover. Brazil's stance is often balanced between economic development with environmental health and protection.
- **China** - Following the SARS and COVID-19 outbreaks, China has significantly tightened regulations regarding the trade and consumption of terrestrial wildlife, playing a key role in global pandemic prevention.
- **United States** - The major founder of global health initiatives and epidemiological research (via CDC and USAID), strongly advocating for a transparent global surveillance network.

Organisations

- **EcoHealth Alliance and the World Wildlife Fund (WWF)** - which conduct field research on spillover risks and advocate for habitat preservation.
- **The agricultural and livestock industries** - whose farming practices are heavily scrutinized for contributing to zoonotic disease risks (e.g., Avian flu in poultry).
- **Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)** - which actively manages regional zoonotic outbreaks like Mpox and Ebola.

Guiding questions

- 1. How can the international community implement the “One Health” framework without severely disrupting the agricultural economies of developing nations?
- 2. What global regulations should be placed on wildlife markets and the international wildlife trade to prevent future spillover events?
- 3. How can early warning surveillance systems be equitably funded and maintained in resource-depleted regions?
- 4. What role does climate change and deforestation play in the rising threat of zoonotic diseases?

- 5. How can data-sharing regarding novel animal pathogens be enforced among Member States without violating national sovereignty?