



Leaders Call for Greater Focus on Preventing Pandemics at the Source

High-level discussion calls on governments to translate pandemic prevention commitments into action on spillover, One Health and financing

New York City, 25 September 2026 - At yesterday's high-level discussion, *Upstream Prevention: From Global Commitments to National Action*, policymakers, scientists and civil society leaders called for a stronger global health security approach, one that complements preparedness and response with action to prevent zoonotic diseases at their source and address the conditions that enable spillover. The urgency is clear: Ebola Bundibugyo, the recent hantavirus cluster, mpox and the ongoing threat of highly pathogenic avian influenza show that zoonotic diseases do not wait for political processes.

Convened in New York by the United Nations Development Programme, the Wildlife Conservation Society, Preventing Pandemics at the Source, FOUR PAWS, the Planetary Health Alliance, and the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations, the discussion explored how multisectoral **One Health and Planetary Health approaches** can help prevent disease emergence and reduce the risk of future pandemics.

Most emerging infectious diseases being zoonotic, preventing spillover is a critical component of pandemic prevention. Participants highlighted the need to address interconnected drivers of spillover, including deforestation, land-use change, biodiversity loss, climate change, agricultural intensification, weak animal and wildlife health systems and commercial wildlife trade.

Right Honourable **Helen Clark**, Former Prime Minister of New Zealand and Co-Chair of the WHO Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response, pointed out that *"If we don't confront what's happening, we run the risk of seeing recurrent outbreaks in regions of the world which don't normally get the headlines."*

Five priorities for implementation

Speakers highlighted five priority areas that should be addressed at the UN High-Level Meeting:

- **Address upstream drivers of spillover** by protecting biodiversity and ecosystems, promoting sustainable natural resource management, and strengthening animal and wildlife health systems.
- **Put One Health into action** through national plans that prioritize spillover prevention and connect human, animal and environmental health sectors.
- **Strengthen international cooperation** across the Quadripartite and frameworks including the UNFCCC, CITES and CBD, as well as forums such as the G7 and G20.
- **Advance pandemic governance**, including completion of the Pandemic Agreement's PABS annex and full implementation of the amended International Health Regulations.
- **Secure sustainable financing**, including stronger support for the World Bank-hosted Pandemic Fund and integration of spillover prevention into the Pandemic Agreement's Coordinating Financial Mechanism.

Anne-Claire Amprou, chair of Unitaids' Executive Board and the French Ambassador for Global Health, reminds us that *"We cannot assume that critical commitments will remain in place by themselves, we have to turn these commitments into reality"*.

Speakers stressed that pandemic prevention through One Health requires a **whole-of-government** and **whole-of-society approach**, bringing together governments across sectors, scientists, the private sector, civil society, Indigenous Peoples and local communities.

Priya Basu, Executive Head of the Pandemic Fund hosted by the World Bank, concluded the discussion by saying that *"Responding to crises is political expediency; preparing for an outbreak that hasn't yet happened takes political leadership. Prevention is the cheapest, most effective investment a government can make, but because its success is invisible, it takes real determination to fund it, without a crisis to justify it or to make it measurable."*

As governments meet at UN Headquarters tomorrow to adopt the Political Declaration, participants called on Member States to ensure its implementation reflects the full scope of pandemic prevention, including a strong focus on preventing pathogen spillover and addressing the upstream drivers that enable pandemics to emerge.

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Notes to Editors

About the event

Upstream Prevention: From Global Commitments to National Action was held on 24 September 2026 at UNDP Headquarters in New York, ahead of the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response.

The event was co-hosted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS), Preventing Pandemics at the Source (PPATS), FOUR PAWS, the Planetary Health Alliance and the Permanent Mission of France to the United Nations.

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