

Strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies

Strengthening collaboration on One Health

Report by the Director-General

INTRODUCTION

1. In 2021, the Seventy-fourth World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA74.7 on strengthening WHO preparedness for and response to health emergencies. The resolution requests the Director-General, as soon as practicably possible and in consultation with Member States: “to build on and strengthen the existing cooperation among WHO, FAO, OIE and UNEP to develop options, for consideration by their respective governing bodies, including establishing a common strategy on One Health, including a joint workplan on One Health to improve prevention, monitoring, detection, control and containment of zoonotic disease outbreaks”.

2. Consequently, the WHO Secretariat has worked closely with The Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health to strengthen the existing tripartite partnership (known as the Tripartite) by inviting the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP) to join them in the Tripartite. The four organizations subsequently drafted the One Health Joint Plan of Action to set out future shared activities in One Health. The One Health Joint Plan of Action is in direct response to resolution WHA74.7, in that it is one of the options suggested in the resolution to strengthen the collaboration between the four organizations, for consideration by their respective governing bodies.

UNEP JOINS THE TRIPARTITE TO IMPLEMENT THE ONE HEALTH APPROACH

3. In February 2021, the Tripartite invited UNEP to join the Tripartite, reaffirming the importance of the environmental dimension in the context of the One Health collaboration. In this regard, at the 28th Tripartite Executive Annual Meeting (TEAM28), on 17 and 18 March 2022, the Principals of the four organizations signed an agreement admitting UNEP as a full and equal partner of the Tripartite thereby effectively constituting a Quadripartite One Health collaboration. At the same meeting, WHO took over the chairmanship of the Quadripartite from FAO and will further integrate UNEP in all existing and future planned joint One Health activities.

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAFT ONE HEALTH JOINT PLAN OF ACTION

4. The full text of the draft One Health Joint Plan of Action is available on the WHO website.¹ The present document summarizes its vision, scope and action tracks, identified jointly by the Quadripartite.

Development process

5. The draft Joint Plan of Action was developed through a participatory and inclusive process. Firstly, a drafting team was established within the four organizations. A scoping study was then conducted covering all existing One Health programmes. Based on this initial analysis, a first draft of the Joint Plan of Action was produced. The draft was subject to in-depth review by the headquarters and regional offices of the four organizations, with technical inputs provided by the One Health High Level Expert Panel. On 31 March, WHO organized a Member States information session to introduce the draft Joint Plan of Action and launched a three-week online consultation targeting Member States.² Based on all the comments received from the internal and external review, a revised draft was produced and presented to TEAM28, at which meeting the Quadripartite agreed on the vision, scope, and content of the draft Joint Plan of Action.

Vision and scope

6. The vision of the draft Joint Plan of Action is of a world better able to prevent, predict, detect, and respond to health threats and improve the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment, while contributing to sustainable development.

7. The draft Joint Plan of Action is intended to guide the four organizations to work together on One Health, with the aim of supporting their constituent parties to build One Health capacities. It is not a binding policy document. It provides a framework for action and proposes a set of activities that the four organizations can offer together to advance and sustainably scale up One Health. The draft Joint Plan of Action uses a One Health approach to strengthen collaboration, communication, capacity building, and coordination equally across all sectors responsible for addressing health concerns at the human-animal-plant-environment interface.

Six action tracks

8. The draft Joint Plan of Action is built around six interdependent action tracks that collectively contribute to achieving sustainable health and food systems, reduced global health threats and improved ecosystem management:

- (i) Enhancing One Health capacities to strengthen health systems.
- (ii) Reducing the risks from emerging and re-emerging zoonotic epidemics and pandemics.

¹ Draft One Health Joint Plan of Action (2022-2026), Working together for the health of humans, animals, plants and the environment. WHO/FAO/IOE/UNEP; March 2022 (<https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/online-consultation-call-for-member-states-comments-on-the-draft-one-health-joint-plan-of-action>, accessed 10 April 2022).

² See <https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/online-consultation-call-for-member-states-comments-on-the-draft-one-health-joint-plan-of-action>, accessed 29 April 2022.

- (iii) Controlling and eliminating endemic zoonotic, neglected tropical and vector-borne diseases.
- (iv) Strengthening the assessment, management and communication of food safety risks.
- (v) Curbing the silent pandemic of antimicrobial resistance.
- (vi) Integrating the environment into One Health.

Each action track consists of a set of actions with specific activities, deliverables, and a timeline to achieve the following objectives:

- (i) Provide adequate guidance and tools for effective implementation of multisectoral approaches in promoting the health of humans, animals, plants, and ecosystems and preventing and managing risks at the human-animal-plant-environment interface.
- (ii) Reduce the risk and minimize local and global impacts of zoonotic epidemics and pandemics, through understanding the linkages and drivers of emergence and spillover, adopting upstream prevention, and strengthening One Health surveillance, early warning, and response systems.
- (iii) Reduce the burden of endemic zoonotic, neglected tropical and vector-borne diseases by supporting countries to implement community-centric, risk-based solutions, strengthening policy and legal frameworks from local to global level and across sectors, and increasing political commitment and investment.
- (iv) Promote awareness, policy changes and action coordination among stakeholders to ensure that humans, animals and ecosystems achieve health – and remain in that state – in their interactions with and along the food supply chain.
- (v) Take joint actions to preserve antimicrobial efficacy and ensure sustainable and equitable access to antimicrobials for responsible and prudent use in human, animal and plant health.
- (vi) Protect and restore biodiversity, prevent the degradation of ecosystems and the wider environment to jointly support the health of people, animals, plants and ecosystems underpinning sustainable development.

THE WAY FORWARD

9. WHO is the chair of the Quadripartite secretariat from 2022–2023. One of the key activities is the roll-out and implementation of the Joint Plan of Action. The draft Joint Plan of Action will first go through the four organizations' respective governing bodies before its finalization and official launch. The Quadripartite will then further develop an implementation framework and a resource mobilization plan for the activities identified within the draft Joint Plan of Action during its timeframe from 2022 to 2026.

ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY

10. The Health Assembly is invited to note the report and provide guidance on next steps.

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