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### **Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime: Proposed international Pandemics Treaty must address prevention**

**June 23, 2021 HONG KONG** - The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime today welcomed a proposed international Pandemics Treaty on preparedness and response but urged the global health community to include prevention as it looks beyond COVID-19.

The Treaty, proposed by the World Health Assembly, addresses gaps in global health security governance and provides an opportunity to rethink the current international response to pandemics.

In a [briefing paper](#)<sup>1</sup>, [The Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime](#) (EWC) said the Treaty aligned with its objective, which is to address serious gaps in the existing international legal framework for combating wildlife crime and regulating the wildlife trade.

But, EWC said, the proposed Treaty should also promote international legal reforms to help prevent future pandemics emerging from human interaction with wild animals and help institutionalise a ‘One Health’ approach to wildlife trade and markets.

“At some stage, we will get through the pandemic, but when we do, it won’t be over,” said John Scanlon AO, Chair of the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime. “Far from it. Our international legal framework needs to be updated to help prevent future wildlife-related pandemics.”

“The proposed International Pandemics Treaty presents an ideal opportunity to collectively address the public health risk posed by the trade and marketing of wild animals. We urge the WHO and interested States to look to prevent viruses spilling over in the first place, and commend the global health community for its leadership.”

While it’s still too early to draw any final conclusions about the origins of COVID-19, the links between wildlife and previous epidemics and pandemics are well-known, as are the conditions that make the spillover of viruses from animals to humans more likely. With risks exacerbated by habitat destruction and illegal or poorly regulated wildlife trade including wildlife markets that bring together wild and captive bred animals.

“The proposed Pandemics Treaty provides a real opportunity for the international community to focus on future pandemic preparedness. However, if we are to learn the lessons from

COVID-19, the focus must also be on prevention” Said Will Travers OBE, Founder of the Born Free Foundation.

“Every effort must be made to identify and bring to an end those practices that risk further zoonotic disease spillover from wildlife, and for a One Health approach to be cemented in international law. The practical solutions offered by the Global Initiative to End Wildlife Crime would be a very good place to start,” Travers said.

"It's critical that countries around the world work together not only to contain the spread of the next possible outbreak, but also to prevent it from emerging in humans altogether. Institutionalizing a 'One Health' approach should be considered as an integral part of that solution." Said Susan Lylis, Executive Vice President at The ICCF Group.

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<sup>i</sup> [The briefing paper](#) released by EWC offers tangible ideas on the content of an International Pandemics Treaty and advances discussions on illegal wildlife trade law reform. More specifically, the EWC urges the WHO and interested States to:

- Ensure the scope of the proposed Treaty addresses the prevention of the spillover of viruses and other pathogens from wild animals to people in the first place.
- Include a binding legal obligation on States within the proposed Treaty that commits Parties not to trade in, or market, any wild animals, either domestically or internationally, without first assessing the risks of any such trade, or markets, to animal and/or human health. This would institutionalise taking a ‘One Health’ approach to wild animal trade and markets.
- Engage with existing international regulatory bodies, including the UN Convention against Transnational Organised Crime (UNTOC) and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), in order to ensure coherence with related regulatory and implementation mechanisms.