

Pioneering a New Era of One Health Collaboration: The Quadripartite Agreement - FAO, WHO, WOA, UNEP

Can be accessed at WHO One Health <https://www.who.int/teams/one-health-initiative/quadripartite-secretariat-for-one-health>



Introduction

The necessity for resilient health systems and accelerated global action is evident in the face of recent international public health emergencies, including the COVID-19 pandemic, outbreaks of diseases like Mpox and Ebola, and persistent threats from other zoonotic diseases, antimicrobial resistance (AMR), food safety concerns, as well as ecosystem degradation and climate change. In response to these urgent and intricate challenges, One Health emerges as the primary approach to effectively address these and safeguard our society.

The four international agencies, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH : earlier known as OIE), and the UN Environment Programme (UNEP) have signed a ground breaking agreement to strengthen cooperation to sustainably balance and optimize the health of humans, animals, plants and the environment.

On 17 March 2022, the heads of the four organizations –Director-General of FAO, Director-General of WHO, Director-General of WOAH, and Executive Director of UNEP, -signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) for joint One Health works. With this UNEP joined the former Tripartite (FAO, OIE and WHO) as an equal partner to form a new Quadripartite Collaboration for One Health.

The new Quadripartite MoU provides a legal and formal framework for the four organizations to tackle the challenges at the human, animal, plant and ecosystem interface using a more integrated and coordinated approach. This framework will also contribute to reinforce national and regional health systems and services.

The One Health Joint Plan of Action (OHJPA)

OH JPA was launched by the Quadripartite –FAO, WHO, WOAH and UNEP on 17 October 2022, developed through a participatory process, it provides a set of activities that aim to strengthen collaboration, communication, capacity building, and coordination equally across all sectors responsible for addressing health concerns at the human-animal-plant-environment interface. It aims to create a framework to integrate systems and capacity to collectively better prevent, predict, detect, and respond to health threats. Ultimately, this initiative seeks to improve the health of humans, animals, plants, and the environment, while contributing to sustainable development.

The five-year plan (2022-2026) focuses on supporting and expanding capacities in six areas: enhancing One Health capacities to strengthen health systems; reducing the risks from emerging and re-emerging zoonotic epidemics and pandemics; controlling and eliminating endemic zoonotic, neglected tropical, and vector-borne diseases; strengthening the assessment, management, and communication of food safety risks; curbing the silent pandemic of antimicrobial resistance; and integrating the environment into One Health.

This technical document is informed by evidence, best practices, and existing guidance. It covers a set of actions which endeavour to advance One Health at global, regional and national levels. These actions notably include the development of an upcoming implementation guidance for countries, international partners, and non-State actors such as civil society organizations, professional associations, academia and research institutions.

The plan sets out operational objectives, which include: providing a framework for collective and coordinated action to mainstream the One Health approach at all levels; providing upstream policy and legislative advice and technical assistance to help set national targets and priorities; and promoting multinational, multi-sector, multidisciplinary collaboration, learning and exchange of knowledge, solutions and technologies. It also fosters the values of cooperation and shared responsibility, multisectoral action and partnership, gender equity, and inclusiveness.

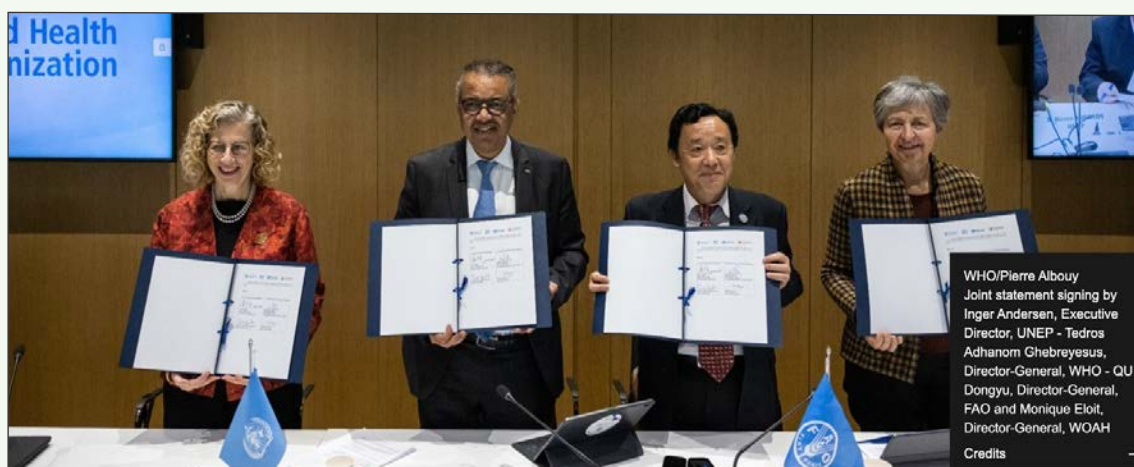
The first annual face-to-face meeting was held on 27 March 2023, the heads of the Quadripartite organizations working on One Health issued an unprecedented call for enhanced global action.

Stressing the need for enhanced collaboration and commitment to translate the One Health approach into policy action in all countries, the Quadripartite leaders urged all countries and key stakeholders to promote and undertake the following priority actions:

- Prioritize One Health in the international political

agenda, increase understanding and advocate for the adoption and promotion of the enhanced intersectoral health governance. The One Health approach should notably serve as a guiding principle in global mechanisms; including in the new pandemic instrument and the pandemic fund to strengthen pandemic prevention, preparedness and response;

- Strengthen national One Health policies, strategies and plans, costed and prioritized in line with the Quadripartite One Health Joint Plan of Action (OH JPA), to foster wider implementation across relevant sectors and at all levels;
- Accelerate the implementation of One Health plans, including supporting of national One Health governance and multisectoral coordination mechanisms, development of situation analyses, stakeholder mapping, priority setting, and metrics for One Health monitoring and evaluation frameworks;
- Build intersectoral One Health workforces that



have the skills, capacities and capabilities to prevent, detect, control, and respond to health threats in a timely and effective way, by strengthening joint pre-service and continuing education for human, animal, and environmental health workforces;

- Strengthen and sustain prevention of pandemics and health threats at source, targeting activities and places that increase the risk of zoonotic spillover between animals to humans;
- Encourage and strengthen One Health scientific knowledge and evidence creation and exchange, research and development, technology transfer and sharing and integrating of information and data and facilitate access to new tools and technologies;

- Increase investment and financing of One Health strategies and plans ensuring scaled up implementation at all levels, including funding for prevention of health threats at source.

To build one healthier planet we need urgent action to galvanize vital political commitments, greater investment and multisectoral collaboration at every level.

The Quadripartite has been playing a central role in promoting and coordinating a global One Health approach, in line with the OH JPA. To further support countries and governments putting the One Health approach into practice, the Quadripartite partners developed an OH JPA implementation guide released in 2023.

While the One Health concept has long been recognized as a vital approach, its implementation has often faced challenges and remained largely confined to theoretical discussions. However, the dawn of a new era has arrived with the Quadripartite Agreement, poised to breathe life into One Health initiatives. Actions of the Quadripartite,

by fostering tangible results and transforming realm of paperwork to bring about real-world impact, will ignite enthusiasm within nations across the globe.

(Excerpted by Dr Mala Chhabra, Consultant Microbiology ABVIMS & Dr RML Hospital, New Delhi.)