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The São Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health

Humanity, and indeed all of life on Earth, is at a crossroads. Over the past several decades, the scale of human impacts on Earth's natural systems has increased exponentially to the point where it exceeds our planet's capacity to absorb our wastes or provide the resources we are using. The result is a vast and accelerating transformation and degradation of nature.¹ This includes not only global climate change but also global scale pollution of air, water, and soil; degradation of our planet's forests, rivers, coastal, and marine systems; and the sixth mass extinction of life on Earth.

The core insight of planetary health is that these disruptions and degradations of natural systems are a clear and urgent threat not only to the web of life but to humanity itself. The scale of our own environmental impacts is threatening our nutrition and mental health, increasing exposure to infectious diseases and non-communicable diseases, and driving population displacement and conflict.² On our current trajectory, we can no longer safeguard human health and wellbeing.

The COVID-19 pandemic is a turning point within each of our lifetimes and must serve as a moment of transition for humanity. To protect human health and all of life on Earth, we will need to, and can, effect urgent, deep, structural changes in how we live. This great transition demands a rapid shift in how we produce and consume food, energy, and manufactured goods; requires rethinking the way we design and live in the world's cities; and insists we heal our relationship with nature and to each other. Such a paradigm shift requires participation of every sector, every community, and every individual.

The São Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health is a global call to action from the planetary health community charting a path forward to

support a more equitable and resilient post-pandemic world. The Declaration's cross-cutting recommendations were drafted during the 2021 Planetary Health Annual Meeting and Festival in São Paulo, Brazil, concluding with a global consultation of nearly 350 participants from more than 70 countries supported by the United Nations Development Programme.

We know what needs to change to safeguard the health of the planet and people for future generations. The São Paulo Declaration urges us to act now.

The São Paulo Declaration including a list of over 250 organization signatories from more than 47 countries is available in the appendix. The Declaration is available in multiple languages via the official website.

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**Samuel S Myers, Jeremy I Pivor, Antonio M Saraiva*
smyers@hsph.harvard.edu

Department of Environmental Health (SSM) and Planetary Health Alliance (JIP), Harvard T H Chan School of Public Health, Boston, MA 02138, USA; Institute of Advanced Studies and Polytechnic School, University of São Paulo, São Paulo, Brazil

- 1 Steffen W, Broadgate W, Deutsch L, Gaffney O, Ludwig C. The trajectory of the Anthropocene: the great acceleration. *Anthropocene Rev* 2015; 2: 81–98.
- 2 Myers SS, Frumkin H. Planetary health: protecting nature to protect ourselves. Washington, DC: Island Press, 2020.

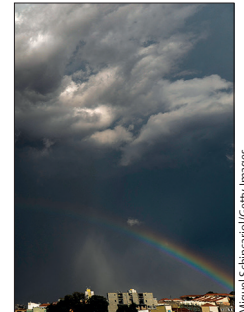
SARS-CoV-2's origin should be investigated worldwide for pandemic prevention

The origin of SARS-CoV-2 has received intensive global attention since its spread was first reported to the international community in early January, 2020. Multiple studies^{1–9} conducted collaboratively by scientists around the world have found that

animal-to-human cross-species spillover is the most likely source of SARS-CoV-2, whereas laboratory leakage is extremely unlikely. However, the research and global health communities have yet to reach a clear conclusion as to the specific time, place, and cross-species transmission route through which SARS-CoV-2 entered the human population.^{1–9}

Viruses could be made in a laboratory; however, there is no scientific evidence to support the idea that SARS-CoV-2 is artificial, and there are also no data to support the notion that any laboratory had handled SARS-CoV-2 or its proximal ancestor before the COVID-19 pandemic.^{7,10,11} Although the bat coronavirus RaTG13, first reported by Wuhan Institute of Virology (WIV), Chinese Academy of Sciences, shares the highest genome-wide sequence identity (96.2%) with SARS-CoV-2 of all known coronaviruses, it still has more than 1000 nucleotide differences, spread evenly across the genome.² Wide consensus has been reached by the scientific community¹¹ that such a virus cannot be the direct source of SARS-CoV-2, or even a template for synthesising SARS-CoV-2. The bat coronaviruses isolated or experimented with by WIV scientists, such as strains WIV1 and WIV16, are SARS-like coronaviruses or alpha coronaviruses. Their sequences differ even further from SARS-CoV-2 than RaTG13, and there is no evidence that they could evolve to SARS-CoV-2.^{12–17} Furthermore, no one presented with respiratory illness similar to COVID-19 in WIV prior to December, 2019, which was corroborated by institution-wide SARS-CoV-2-specific serological testing.⁶ These findings suggest that the outbreak did not start from a laboratory incident at WIV.

Since the SARS outbreak in 2003, China has developed rigorous administration and supervision systems to regulate activities in high-level biosafety laboratories, and enacted a series of laws and decrees in this regard.^{18,19} These laws, decrees, and regulations have built a strict and



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See Online for appendix

For the São Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health see <https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org/sao-paulo-declaration>



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