

**Statement of Senator Joseph I. Lieberman**

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**Subcommittee on Oversight of Government Management,  
the Federal Workforce, and the District of Columbia**

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**Forestalling the Coming Pandemic: Infectious Disease Surveillance Overseas  
October 10, 2007**

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And thank you for holding this important hearing on the United States' preparedness and efforts to combat infectious disease. As stated by Dr. Margaret Chan, director of the World Health Organization, "International public health security is both a collective aspiration and a mutual responsibility."

A growing world population combined with the ease of global travel and a warming planet has lowered the barriers to the spread of infectious disease and now more than ever the United States must work cooperatively to identify and effectively respond to emerging threats. As our panel of witnesses illustrates a number of agencies are working on securing the United States by building capacity for the surveillance and detection of emerging infectious diseases overseas. The GAO report released in conjunction with this hearing says that the U.S. has invested approximately \$ 84 million in this effort over the last two years. However, there is still work to be done.

Not only are diseases emerging at an unprecedented rate, but an overwhelming proportion of these diseases are zoonotic. Avian influenza, West Nile, SARS, and HIV/AIDS are recent and devastating examples of the impact animal born diseases can have when they transition to humans.

The appearance of zoonotic diseases in humans is prevalent in developing countries, where trade in wild animals is concentrated. Therefore, it is important for the U.S. to have a strong presence in these countries to allow for the training of individuals

and the sharing of data. USAID and CDC have been successfully collaborating with the Wildlife Conservation Society through the Global Avian Influenza Network for Surveillance (GAINS) in 28 countries detecting disease in wild bird populations.

While this disease specific program has proven successful it is just the tip of the iceberg -- a key to preventing a pandemic is early detection. Surveillance of an array of wildlife populations will increase our ability to fight the next emerging disease as we will have a better understanding of our enemy. For this reason, my colleagues, Senators Akaka and Brownback, and I have introduced legislation to expand the collaboration of USAID and CDC with the Wildlife Conservation Society to address the need for a global wildlife disease surveillance system.

We must prevent the outbreak and spread of new zoonotic diseases that have no treatments or cures to save the next generation from suffering the pain millions have faced from HIV/AIDS and avian influenza.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.