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Call for the Board of EcoHealth Alliance to remove Dr. Peter Daszak as President of their organization.

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September 30, 2021

Subject: Call for the Board of EcoHealth Alliance to remove Dr. Peter Daszak as President of their organization

Dear Chairperson Green,

The role of “EcoHealth Alliance” (EHA) - the organization you chair - in the emergence of the COVID-19 pandemic, and its subsequent role in the pandemic investigation, have become increasingly controversial and are now attracting much attention.

Only a few days ago, Dr. Jeffrey Sachs, Director of the Center for Sustainable Development at Columbia University and Chairman of the Covid-19 Lancet Commission, dissolved the ‘Lancet Task Force on the Origins’ and was quoted in the [Wall Street Journal](#) as saying:

“I just didn’t want a task force that was so clearly involved with one of the main issues of this whole search for the origins, **which was EcoHealth Alliance.**”

Unfortunately, the driving force behind this unwelcome media and scientific attention stems from the actions and behaviour of EHA President Dr. Peter Daszak, whether in his official capacity as President of EcoHealth Alliance, as a scientific authority, or as a

key member of the WHO-China mission investigating the origins of COVID-19. Dr. Daszak has now been proven to have concealed several extreme situations of conflict of interest, withheld critical information and misled public opinion by expressing falsehoods. Despite that, we have not seen any indication at all of disapproval of the behavior of Dr. Daszak by the EHA Board, nor are we aware of any investigation by the Board, as would seemingly be required [under New York law](#).

The stated mission of EHA is to “lead cutting-edge scientific research into the critical connections between human and wildlife health and delicate ecosystems. With this science, we develop solutions that prevent pandemics and promote conservation.” We note that such an important mission requires essential public and institutional trust allied to an ethical and sound leadership.

Because of Dr. Daszak’s unacceptable behavior, and of the serious consequences for the valuable causes that EHA supports, we are deeply concerned by the absence of any discernible public criticism or meaningful response from EHA Board.

Among numerous liberties taken by Peter Daszak with regards to ethical and scientific norms, here a few examples out of many documented by journalists and scientists :

- Dr. Daszak repeatedly claimed that there was “[zero evidence](#)” that a laboratory incident played any role in the emergence and propagation of the SARS-CoV-2 virus. He went as far as to castigate and demonize those who pointed to the lack of available data beyond very tentative generalizations, using derogatory and slanderous expressions such as “[conspiracy theorists](#)”. As you must know, a research-related accident is now officially considered a plausible scenario that it would be irresponsible to neglect, and that the WHO itself has [firmly included](#) in its latest origins initiative.
- Dr. Daszak wrongly [claimed](#) that his collaborators at the WIV did not keep live bats. Instead, [records show](#) that the WIV has occasionally held wild caught bats since 2009, applied for patents concerning bat cages and bat colonies upkeep, and even officially registered 12 bat cages in 2017. Given that the DEFUSE grant application mentions plans for WIV to keep 20 captive Rhinolophus bats, Dr Daszak must have been already aware of these developments at the very least back in early 2018.
- Dr. Daszak has made many conflicting claims about the WIV databases of virus samples and sequences (all now offline), and then proceeded to convince the WHO team not to look into the issue. He [described these databases](#) as an ‘Excel

spreadsheet' when actually these are 16 databases with [600 GBs of data](#). He variously declared that he knew what was in these DBs (when [talking](#) to the WHO team) or that he could not access important data from these DBs without Chinese cooperation (when [asking](#) for EHA NIH grants to be reinstated). He further justified their unavailability since Sep 2019 by [repeating](#) the unfounded claims that they were taken offline to protect them from hackers [during the pandemic](#) because of hacking attacks.

- The recently emerged [DEFUSE grant proposal](#) is particularly consternating. It proposes creating novel chimeric viruses that are optimized to infect humans and that could unleash unknown and untold havoc, including experiments with MERS-CoV which is far more deadly than SARS-CoV2. Beyond misrepresenting GoF research, the proposal is also at best incredibly sloppy when it comes to biosafety, Dual Use Research of Concern, ELSI (ethical, legal and societal issues). All reasons cited by DARPA to refuse the grant.
- Planning to make 3 to 6 GoF human-optimized virus constructs per year under the DEFUSE grant proposal is shocking enough on its own. To do so with such disdain for biosafety, DURC or ELSI is a professional failure of the highest level and should be enough to conclude that Dr. Daszak has gone a step too far, and is putting his colleagues and human lives in danger.
- Last, the fact that Dr. Daszak never mentioned the existence of that [essential](#) DEFUSE grant proposal, while assuming important and very vocal positions on the origins of the SARS-CoV2 virus for the WHO and for the Lancet Commission, shows profound disrespect for scientific and ethical norms that is without precedent. Both the [Lancet Commission](#) and the [WHO](#) have now distanced themselves from Dr. Daszak.

Dr. Daszak's behaviour has already caused enormous damage to public trust in science and scientists, and will likely resonate for many years to come as a low point in scientific integrity, in the US and beyond.

Despite this turmoil, EcoHealth Alliance still represents a valuable scientific mission and a key message for our present and future generations. However we have reached the unavoidable conclusion that this mission will be greatly compromised if there is any further involvement of Dr. Daszak with EcoHealth Alliance.

We therefore call on the Board of EcoHealth Alliance to fulfill its role and take immediate steps toward the removal of Dr. Peter Daszak from the presidency of your organization.

Yours Sincerely,

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