

# WHO should look beyond animals on Covid-19 origin: Scientists

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The World Health Organization should convene another investigation into the origins of the coronavirus pandemic that looks beyond animal sources, a group of scientists said in an open letter.

The signatories proposed specific steps on what any new probe should take into account. Suggestions include ensuring that a team can undertake studies without the “unnecessary presence” of government officials of the host country, removing any veto powers in the member-selection process and a mandate for broad access to data, records and samples.

## **Key Highlights**

- A joint mission including scientists from China and organized with the WHO found that the coronavirus probably spread from bats to humans via another animal, and considered a laboratory incident the least likely hypothesis.
- Because the study’s aim was defined as probing the zoonotic source of the virus, other theories didn’t receive the same attention and the team didn’t fully investigate labs, Peter Ben Embarek, co-leader of the trip, said after a report was published in March.
- WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said afterward that the probe didn’t adequately analyze the possibility of a lab accident before deciding it’s most likely the pathogen spread from bats to humans via another animal.
- He said he is ready to deploy additional missions involving specialist experts. However, that will require China’s cooperation.

**SOURCE:** *Hindustan Times*