REPORT OF THE MEETING
OF THE
OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

Paris, 26 May 2008

The OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East met on 26 May 2008 at the Maison de la Chimie, Paris, at 2.30 p.m. The meeting was attended by 36 Delegates and observers from 17 Members belonging to the Commission, 2 observer countries/territories and 3 international organisations.

Members of the Commission: Bahrain, Cyprus, Djibouti, Egypt, Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Libya, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, the United Arab Emirates, Yemen

Observer countries/territories: France, Palestinian Authorities

International/regional organisations: FAO\(^1\), ICFAW\(^2\), WSPA\(^3\)

The meeting was chaired by Dr Salman Abdel Nabi (Bahrain), President of the Commission, assisted by Dr Bashir Taha Mohammed Taha (Sudan), Vice-President, and Dr Fares Al Bakhit (Jordan), General Secretary.

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1. FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
2. ICFAW: International Coalition for Farm Animal Welfare
3. WSPA: World Society for the Protection of Animals
The President welcomed the Delegates, observers and representatives of international organisations.

1. **Adoption of the Agenda**

   The Agenda, described in the Appendix, was unanimously adopted and the annexes related to agenda items were circulated.

2. **Contributions of Members to the OIE**

   The President of the Regional Commission reported that outstanding contributions from a number of countries are a matter for concern and urged Members to promptly settle their arrears if they have any.

3. **Activities and work programme of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East**

   Dr Ghazi Yehia, Regional Representative for the Middle East, presented in detail the activities implemented during the last year. He reminded the Regional Commission about themes, conclusions and recommendations of technical workshops that focussed on the main issues affecting the region.

   He described the proposed work programme for 2008-2009.

   Dr Yehia mentioned that more and more important documents were translated into Arabic. Most of those documents are published on the Regional Representation website that is regularly updated with summaries of the most important diseases affecting the region.

   He emphasised the role of the Regional Representation in providing assistance principally on WAHIS, PVS implementation and technical expertise.

   The Delegate of Turkey proposed that workshops on compartmentalisation and vector-borne diseases could be organised.

   The representative of the Jordanian Veterinary Association expressed his wish to consider National Veterinary Associations as observers to OIE work in the region.

   The report on activities and the work programme of the Regional Representation were adopted by the Regional Commission.

4. **Recommendations of the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East (Damascus, Syria, 29 October – 1 November 2007)**

   Dr Salman Abdel Nabi noted that the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, which was held in Damascus, Syria, from 29 October to 1 November 2007, was attended by a large number of Middle Eastern countries and Regional and International Organisations.

   Then he described recommendations adopted during the Conference on the two technical items: namely “the role of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Associations in the promotion of the veterinary profession and upgrading of Veterinary Services” and “the Geographic Information System (GIS) used for animal disease control”.


He explained that during the conference the OIE rinderpest status recognition procedure was presented; this has the objective of recognition of freedom from rinderpest for each Member. A point about WAHIS implementation in the region was also made.

5. **Proposal of a technical item to be included in the Agenda of the 78th General Session of the International Committee to be held in May 2010.**

The Regional Commission proposed the following technical item (including a questionnaire to Members) to be included in the agenda of the 78th General Session:

Guidelines for the establishment and functioning of Veterinary Statutory Bodies and Veterinary Associations

6. **Election of a Vice-President for the Regional Commission.**

Dr Kassem Al Qahtani, Delegate of Qatar to the OIE, was elected Vice-President of the Regional Commission in replacement of Dr Mohammed Al Muhanna (Kuwait).

7. **GF-TADs programme update**

Dr George Khoury (Syria), chairman of the Regional Steering Committee (RSC) of the GF-TADs, reminded the Commission about the creation of the RSC: this has a main objective of adapting policies and programmes related to epidemiology and prevalence of priority diseases to the needs of the region.

He detailed actions carried out in this framework and stressed the role of the newly established Regional Animal Health Centre.

Regional Steering Committee composition was described following question from the Delegate of Iran about the election procedure of the RSC.

8. **OIE-PVS evaluations update in the region**

Dr Pierre Primot, Project Officer, OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East, reported on the status of the OIE programme for evaluating the performance of Veterinary Services using the OIE-PVS tool. He also described the specific status of the Middle East region. He said that, based on the results of this first diagnosis, the next step would be to perform a gap analysis and to prepare priority investment projects, for which the OIE will work in close collaboration with its partner organisations, such as FAO, and with international donors, with the ultimate objective of strengthening Veterinary Services worldwide.

Members wishing to request a gap analysis or a follow-up PVS mission, to assess improvements made since the previous evaluation, should send an application to the OIE Director General.

9. **Other matters**

9.1. **World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS and WAHID) – Progress in its implementation by Member Countries in the Region**

Dr Karim Ben Jebara, Head of the OIE Animal Health Information Department, presented an overview of the global implementation of the OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and described the status of implementation in the region. Data on sanitary information (six-monthly and annual reports) for 2007 and 2008 were presented. Dr Ben Jebara emphasised the importance of countries submitting sanitary information to the OIE on a regular basis. If countries are not satisfied with the map of their country presented in WAHID, they are invited to send updated maps.
9.2. **Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC) in Beirut, Lebanon**

Dr Hassan Aidaros, from FAO, presented the action plan of the FAO ECTAD Unit and the activities implemented in the region. Dr Yehia followed by reminding the Commission about the establishment of the agreement between OIE, FAO and the Lebanese Ministry of Agriculture, which provides a framework for the coordination and harmonisation of monitoring and control strategies for the main TADs in the region.

He explained that the RAHC is located in the building of the OIE Regional Representation, where the FAO ECTAD Unit has been made welcomed.

The RAHC is newly established and its first activities concern the recognition of rinderpest freedom for all regional countries.

9.3. **Focal points**

Dr Yehia reminded the Commission about the role of focal points; these are country experts appointed by the Delegates and acting under their authority to address specific issues in their countries.

The OIE recognised five focal points: sanitary information, wildlife diseases, aquatic diseases, animal welfare, and veterinary products. A focal point for food safety will be created soon.

He explained that few countries have nominated their focal points. He invited Delegates to proceed with their nominations.

9.4. **Laboratory twinning**

Dr Yehia described the possibility for laboratories in the region to make a request to the OIE for assistance for twinning with OIE Reference Laboratories.

Dr Yehia mentioned that there is a need for a Rift Valley fever Reference Laboratory in the region.

He mentioned that there has been an application for twinning between Egypt and the Friedrich-Loeffler-Institut (Germany) for Newcastle disease and avian influenza, this is due to start soon; there have also been expressions of interest from several other countries.

9.5. **Nomination of ME experts for Ad Hoc Groups and Working Groups**

Dr Yehia talked about OIE Working Groups and Ad hoc Groups. He stressed the importance of including experts from the Middle East in such groups to identify topics pertinent to the region. He explained that currently only one representative from the Middle East participates in such groups.

He invited Delegates to propose national experts for the expert database that will soon be constructed.

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ECTAD: Emergency Center for the control of Transboundary Animal Diseases
9.6. **Evolving veterinary education for a safer world**

Dr Yehia informed participants that “Evolving veterinary education for a safer world” is an international conference which will take place at OIE’s Headquarters in Paris from 12-14 October 2009. The main purpose of the Conference is to reach consensus in order to recommend to the international veterinary community a new veterinary curriculum. This should ensure that future graduates are increasingly able to work in an international environment applying OIE standards for disease surveillance, veterinary public health, food safety and animal welfare.

He invited Delegates to send the list of Veterinary Schools and Universities in their countries and to schedule participation at this conference.

9.7. **Proposal of a technical item to be included in the Agenda of the 10th Conference of the Regional Commission to be held in Qatar in 2009.**

The following technical item (with questionnaire) was chosen:

Capabilities of veterinary laboratories in the region – Needs to improve animal disease diagnostic.

Delegates advocated that the OIE procedure for Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres should be presented during the Conference.

9.8. **World Veterinary Congress**

Dr Abedel-Fattah Al-Kilani (Jordan Veterinary Association) summarised the situation for veterinary associations in the region. Some of these have formed a regional federation. He explained that during the next World Veterinary Congress to be held in July 2008 in Vancouver, Canada, the new bureau of the World Veterinary Association will be elected.

The President of the Commission addressed a motion of thanks to countries holding regional conferences, seminars or workshops: Egypt, Jordan, Kuwait, Qatar and Syria.

The meeting ended at 5.00 p.m.  

.../Appendix
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Agenda

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13. Recommendations of the 9th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East (Damascus, Syria, 29 October – 1 November 2007)
14. Proposal of a technical item to be included in the Agenda of the 78th General Session of the International Committee to be held in May 2010.
15. Election of a Vice-President for the Regional Commission.
16. GF-TADs programme update
17. OIE-PVS evaluations update in the region
18. Other matters

9.1. World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS and WAHID) – Progress in its implementation by Member Countries in the Region
9.2. Regional Animal Health Centre (RAHC) in Beirut, Lebanon
9.3. Focal points
9.4. Laboratory twinning
9.5. Nomination of ME experts for Ad Hoc Groups and Working Groups
9.6. Evolving veterinary education for a safer world
9.7. Proposal of a technical item to be included in the Agenda of the 10th Conference of the Regional Commission to be held in Qatar in 2009.
9.8. World Veterinary Congress