



## Statement of the OIE Wildlife Working Group, April 2020

### Wildlife Trade and Emerging Zoonotic Diseases

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The majority of recently-emerging infectious diseases have wildlife origins, among them Lassa, Monkeypox, Marburg, Nipah and numerous other viral diseases. Within the coronavirus family, zoonotic viruses have been linked to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) epidemic in 2003 and the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) first detected in 2012. The COVID-19 pandemic stemmed from introduction of a novel coronavirus ("SARS-CoV-2") into human populations. While the specific mechanism of SARS-CoV-2 emergence has not been definitively identified, at some point or over time interactions occurred that allowed for cross - and perhaps multiple - species pathogen transmission. The OIE recognizes the repeated emergence of zoonotic diseases and the linkages of some of these along the value chain of the wildlife trade. SARS and Ebola virus disease are recent examples of diseases that have resulted in severe socio-economic crises as a consequence of the poorly regulated wildlife trade.

The wildlife trade poses threats to animal health and welfare, causes impoverishment of biodiversity, and may result in serious public health problems. The trade has resulted in severe detrimental effects on biodiversity, species conservation and depletion of Member country national resources. The OIE acknowledges that the wildlife trade is an important source of protein, income and livelihoods for many local or rural communities. However, this must be balanced with the

aforementioned risks. Thus, there is a need to support legal, sustainable and responsible wildlife use by providing sound guidance, standards, and risk assessment and risk management tools.

The OIE is developing guidelines or standards for trade in wildlife based on sound governance and regulatory principles that reduce health risks, and support animal welfare and biodiversity conservation. These standards will result in sustainable and responsible practices in legal trade, transportation, capture, farming, marketing, and consumption of wildlife. The OIE is also focused on the creation of a set of tools for Members to ensure best practices regarding risk assessments and disease management associated with the value chain for the wildlife trade. This includes strengthening scientific networks to increase sustained Member country capacity for early threat detection, wildlife disease surveillance, information management, risk assessment, prevention of spill over events, and implementation of mitigation measures. The OIE is also committed to communicate risk and prevention measures to stakeholders to increase knowledge and awareness of Veterinary Services' role in reducing spillover events, and to inform at-risk populations of the risks and reduction strategies, to effect appropriate behaviour change.

The OIE believes adoption of such measures will help prevent future pandemics, protect natural resources, contribute to species conservation and allow economic activities to flourish.