

## **DRAFT OF SPEECH**

### **Middle East Regional Conference**

Dear Ministers from Bahrain, Jordan and Lebanon

Dear President of the Regional Commission for the Middle East: **DR FAJER AL SALLOOM**

Dear Director General of the OIE: **DR MONIQUE ELOIT**

Dear Delegates from the Region

Dear Representatives of International Organisations

Dear OIE and Regional Commission staff

Please be welcome to the 16<sup>th</sup> Middle East Regional Conference.

It is an honour to me to have been invited to participate in this Regional Conference, particularly as President of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE. I wish to thank the other members of the Council of the OIE for the invitation extended to me.

Due to the current circumstances, we are facing very difficult and critical situations, like the COVID-19 pandemic. The future seems challenging for the OIE and we will be addressing events, such as climate and socio-environmental change, emerging diseases that affect, or may affect, people's health or the provision of animal protein to the world, a necessary and crucial element for the survival and development of humanity.

This leads us to point out the increasing importance of OIE standards and guidelines, which are established and approved based on scientific knowledge and research that ensure the prevention, management and eradication of diseases and that also ensure countries a safe trade in animals and animal products.

However, for an effective application of OIE standards, Veterinary Services must have sufficient quality and capacity, and they should adequately implement OIE standards and interact with both private and international organisations.

It is important that the Delegates of the Member Countries collaborate with the OIE through their knowledge and experiences. As I mentioned earlier, we have great challenges, such as prevalent and emerging diseases, animal welfare, antimicrobial resistance and influence of wildlife. As for the COVID-19 pandemic, a very relevant and present factor, it is highly likely to be of animal origin. This reminds us of the critical importance of the ONE HEALTH concept, which summarises the idea that human health and animal health are interdependent and bound to the health of the ecosystems in which they exist. The impact that

these issues may have on the future of humanity will depend on the strengths and weaknesses of the world's Veterinary Services.

I would like to make a special mention to the 7<sup>th</sup> Strategic Plan, approved during the last General Session in May. ITS EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION WILL NECESSARILY REQUIRE THE SUPPORT AND MONITORING OF ALL THE DELEGATES OF THE MEMBER COUNTRIES. I thus urge the Veterinary Services of this region to further participate and collaborate with the OIE. The strengths of our organisation will depend exclusively on the support and effective participation of the Delegates of the Member Countries.

Finally, I would like to thank once again the kind invitation extended to me to participate in this event and I wish success and the best of luck to both those who make this conference possible and all the participating colleagues and guests.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH