

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

Paris, 21 May 2018

The OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East met on 21 May 2018 at the Maison de la Chimie, Paris at 2:00 p.m. The meeting was attended by 44 participants, including Delegates and observers from 14 Members of the Commission, 1 observer territory, and representatives from 3 international or regional organisations:

Members of the Commission: Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Somalia, Sudan, Syria, Turkey, and United Arab Emirates.

Observer territory: Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

International/regional organisations: FAO¹, EUFMD², AAAID, JOVAC, FAKIEH Ind. FEI, CVRL and the Donkey Sanctuary.

The meeting was chaired by Dr Majid Al-Qassimi, President of the OIE Regional Commission and Delegate of United Arab Emirates, accompanied by Dr Elias Ibrahim, Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission and Delegate of Lebanon, and assisted by Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda, described in the Appendix, was suggested by the Chair. He informed the meeting that two items had been proposed to be added to the agenda; an “Update on Camel Middle East Network (CAMENET)” and “the Establishment of the Aquatic Middle East Network (AQMENET)”, a proposed regional network on aquatic animal health. With the agreement of the Members, these items would be fitted in prior to the discussions relating to the OIE elections. The new agenda items were endorsed for inclusion and the new agenda unanimously adopted.

2. Activities of the Regional Representation in 2018

Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East, summarised the activities of the Regional Representation during the 2017-2018 period, highlighting its primary objectives, which are to build the capacity of Veterinary Services for the appropriate implementation of OIE standards and to control and manage animal diseases including zoonoses.

Activities organised during the year were targeted at:

¹ FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

² EUFMD: European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease

- improving the regional animal disease information;
- securing animal health and welfare by assisting countries in developing appropriate risk management;
- establishing cooperation and harmonising strategies between Middle Eastern countries on important issues of regional concern: the Mediterranean Animal Health Network (REMESA), animal welfare training among others;
- strengthening collaboration with regional and international organisations, such as the World Health Organization (WHO) (including connections between International Health Regulations and the OIE PVS Pathway), FAO (including activities under the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs)), the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD), and the African Union Inter-african Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR);
- holding conferences and seminars targeting specific issues related to animal and public health, especially training seminars for Focal Points (for animal welfare, veterinary products, communication, veterinary laboratories and aquatic animals);
- promoting the capacities and capabilities of regional laboratories and coordinating their activities (Twinning projects);
- supporting veterinary education through Twinning with developed country institutions.

In addition to the above mentioned activities, there are specific activities devoted to aquatic, equine and camel diseases (e.g. Camel Middle East Network, Aquatic Middle East Network), which will require ongoing attention over the coming years.

3. Second OIE annual report on the use of antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals

Dr Elisabeth Erlacher-Vindel, Head of the OIE Science and New Technologies Department, presented the Second OIE annual report on antimicrobial agents intended for use in animals, which had been published in late December 2017. Member Countries' participation was much higher and more detailed information was provided than for the first OIE annual report. For example, a larger number of countries responded (146 compared to 130 in the first round) and a larger number provided quantitative data (107 compared to 89 in the first round).

In the second annual report, countries that were unable to provide quantitative data were asked to provide information on the barriers they faced. Thirty-eight countries responded, with most reporting that the relevant data (mainly import data) were held by national authorities outside of veterinary or agricultural services, most often the Ministry of Health. In addition, there were also issues in terms of information exchange between the public and private sectors relating to antimicrobial use.

The additional analysis for quantitative data adjusted for the new OIE animal biomass methodology was also presented, expressed in milligrams per kilogram of animal biomass. Animal biomass was calculated for food-producing species in countries reporting quantitative data for the year 2014, primarily using data from the OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and Food and Agriculture Organization Statistics (FAOSTAT). Bovines represented the majority of the animal biomass for the 60 countries reporting amounts of antimicrobials for 2014.

The results from the third data-collection round will be presented at the Second OIE global conference on antimicrobial resistance and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in animals: putting standards into practice. As of 2 May 2018, a total of 151 countries have responded in the third round, with 116 countries providing quantitative data.

Although there is limited data from the Middle East, existing data shows a very high relative

use of macrolides, which is highly important to human health. The presenter encouraged the Members to try promote the use of other antibiotics.

Given low response rates, she also made a plea for the Members to make an effort to send in more data on their antimicrobial use as well as providing animal biomass data (especially for camelids) as this was important to properly measure prudent use in this Region. She informed the Members that a questionnaire relating to the third round of data collection would be circulated around the end of October 2018.

4. Outcomes of the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East

Dr Elias Ibrahim, Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission and OIE Delegate of Lebanon, described the outcomes of the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission, held in Istanbul (Turkey) from 2 to 6 October 2017, which had been attended by a total of 67 participants, comprising OIE Delegates and/or representatives of 11 Member Countries and senior officers from 5 regional and international organisations.

Dr Ibrahim listed the main recommendations developed following the discussions of each of the two technical items. Technical Item I (with questionnaire), entitled “Sustainable strengthening of the epidemio-surveillance systems in the Middle East Member Countries”, had led to recommendations for Member Countries, in particular, to: define their duties, develop relevant legislation and undertake surveillance planning, applying the general and disease-specific provisions of the OIE *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*; commit to enhancing surveillance, especially through better communication and collaboration between bordering countries, as well as in reporting disease occurrences; ensure they have the required number of suitably trained staff to perform epidemio-surveillance activities relevant to their animal health situation; nominate their relevant OIE National Focal Points and ensure their participation in OIE capacity-building activities; be actively involved in all relevant activities related to strengthening intersectoral collaboration; take advantage of the new proposed approaches of the PVS Pathway. Technical Item I had also led to recommendations for the OIE, in particular, to: accelerate the modernisation of WAHIS (WAHIS+) to ensure that the system remains a relevant tool for informing about and analysing the animal health situation worldwide; provide guidelines on the expected competencies of veterinary paraprofessionals involved in epidemio-surveillance activities; continue to provide capacity-building activities for the benefit of relevant OIE National Focal Points; secure funds by exploring with interested partners and donors; support the implementation of PVS Pathway missions and related activities in the region.

Technical Item II (without questionnaire), entitled “Addressing challenges in the Middle East at the human-animal interface under the One Health concept”, had led to recommendations for Member Countries to: pursue their engagement in the OIE PVS Pathway by requesting PVS Evaluation or PVS Evaluation follow-up missions and other missions under this programme and ensure not only that the results of these missions are made available and used during IHR Self-Evaluation, WHO Joint External Evaluation (JEE) missions and all other IHR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework-related activities, but also that the Veterinary Services also participate actively in these activities; establish and make fully active a National One Health Committee(s) or equivalent (if they have not already done so) as a forum to address the challenges at the human-animal-environment interface; request WHO and the OIE to undertake IHR/PVS National Bridging Workshops in the Middle East region; advocate and communicate on the One Health concept among all relevant national stakeholders. Technical Item II had also led to recommendations for the OIE, in particular, to: communicate widely on the recent Tripartite’s Commitment document, in collaboration with FAO and WHO, and, in collaboration with WHO, to strengthen connections between the PVS Pathway and the IHR Monitoring and Evaluation Framework in order to ensure that

Veterinary Services are systematically considered as key actors and leading partners in global health security.

5. Implementation of the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy

In the absence of Dr Ahmad Zahran, OIE Focal Point on animal welfare of the United Arab Emirates, Dr Majid Al Qassimi took his place to brief participants on the training modules on long-haul transport by land and by sea, developed to support implementation of OIE animal welfare standards. These modules were presented during two sessions of Training-the-Trainers Workshops in selected countries in the region, respectively in Amman (Jordan) and Cairo (Egypt).

While the training materials cover animal welfare chiefly in relation to long-haul transport, they also could be applied to short-haul transport. The materials address the welfare of cattle, sheep, horses and poultry during transport, with the focus on animals transported for slaughter.

Six countries of the Middle East were selected to undergo the cycle of three workshops (Egypt, Jordan, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, Syria and United Arab Emirates), with a further three countries attending the third session.

The workshops were successful and much appreciated by the participants who formed strong cooperation links for the future.

A second cycle on the same topics involving the other countries in the region is planned for 2019, together with an inter-regional conference entitled “Long journey scenario on transport of livestock”, to be held jointly with selected exporting countries in Europe and Latin America.

6. Confirmation of the date and venue of the 15th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East to be held in 2019

Dr Majid Al-Qassimi reiterated his country’s offer to host the 15th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East.

He also confirmed that this time the Conference will be held in November 2019 instead of September 2019, the traditional month for holding conferences of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East. Further details including exact dates would be provided in the near future.

7. Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 15th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East

The Regional Commission selected the following technical item (with a questionnaire to Members) for inclusion in the agenda of the 15th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East:

“Better enforcement of standards for safer trade (BESST)”

Given this selected technical item also related to the implementation of standards, the Members agreed that the results of the current 2018 OIE General Session technical item questionnaire on “Implementation of OIE Standards by OIE Member Countries: state of play and specific capacity building needs”, particularly for the Middle East, could be reviewed to ensure there was no duplication and ensure that the new technical item and questionnaire would build on existing OIE information.

In addition, the Members also made additional suggestions for a further technical item (without questionnaire) for later confirmation including:

“Risk communication and emergency management for emerging and transboundary animal

diseases in the region” (without questionnaire)

or

“Wildlife trade and the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES)” (without questionnaire)

or

“Network on laboratory capacity in the region” (without questionnaire)

8. Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the 88th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates to be held in May 2020

The Regional Commission suggested the following technical item (with a questionnaire to Members) for inclusion in the agenda of the 88th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates to be held in May 2020:

“The impact of climate change on emerging and re-emerging diseases.”

9. Preliminary conclusions of the Public Private Progress initiative

Dr Isabelle Dieuzy-Labaye, Senior Advisor, Public-Private Partnerships and Dr Marisa Peyre, Epidemiologist, Deputy Head of the CIRAD-ASTRE Research Unit, provided details on the Public Private Progress initiative, led by the OIE with the support of the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and in collaboration with CIRAD.

During their presentation they highlighted that:

- The initiative aimed to support countries in their use of public-private partnerships (PPPs) to strengthen the capacities of national Veterinary Services. This is in line with the recommendations outlined in Resolution no. 39 on PPPs adopted at the 85th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates.
- The first step of this three-year initiative (November 2016-2019) included the development and analysis of an online survey targeting OIE Delegates and representatives from the animal health private sector worldwide. The results identified three clusters of PPPs in animal health. Key success factors and obstacles in establishing and maintaining PPPs were also surveyed, as well as participants' expectations for the OIE to assist in the promotion and development of PPPs in Veterinary Services.
- The three PPP clusters in the field of Veterinary Services are distinguished by the type of private partners involved and the type of relationship and partnership governance established with the public sector. Thus, the first cluster focuses on the delegation of Veterinary Service activities to private veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals. The second cluster includes producers' associations having developed regular collaboration with public Veterinary Services. The third PPP cluster involves private local or multinational companies.
- Based on best practices identified, the OIE now intends to produce guidelines to support the development of impactful and sustainable partnerships between the public and private sectors aimed at improving the performance of national Veterinary Services worldwide.

10. Update on Camel Middle East Network (CAMENET)

Dr. Al Muhairi from the Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFCA) – United Arab Emirates briefed Members about the CAMENET network including outlining its objective. She mentioned that the CAMENET Steering Committee will meet in November 2018 in Abu Dhabi to start the implementation of the network plan for 2018 and 2019 which includes the inter-laboratory comparison programme on selected camel diseases to test and enhance the proficiency of the laboratories in the region.

A workshop on camel disease epidemiology jointly with a workshop of OIE Focal Points for laboratories, supported by international partner and OIE Reference Laboratories (Italy), will be held in October 2018 in Abou Dhabi United Arab Emirates. This joint event will build capacity and plan and prepare for the inter-laboratory testing programme, where samples will be collected and tested during 2019, and the results will be discussed at the end of 2019. The need to conduct collaborative research was also discussed.

Members requested that clearer planning documentation to facilitate approvals within their countries for involvement in this CAMENET activity should be provided. Dr Ghazi Yehia, Regional Representative for the Middle East, committed to providing this updated documentation via correspondence and it could be discussed further in October 2018.

11. Establishment of the Aquatic Middle East Network (AQMENET)

Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East, briefly presented on a new initiative, the Aquatic Middle East Network, a proposal to develop a network of expertise on aquatic animal health in the region, based on the CAMENET model for camels. The concept was being developed given the growing importance of aquaculture production and associated health risks in the region. Initial activities were intended to begin in 2019 with leadership from Saudi Arabia.

12. Election Procedure the Council, the Regional Commissions and the Specialist Commissions

Dr Jean-Philippe Dop, OIE Deputy Director General “Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities”, and Mr Rodney de Souza, Head of the OIE Strategic Partnerships and Legal Affairs Unit, presented the main aspects of the election process. They pointed out that the 86th General Session provided an opportunity to elect members of the Council, the Bureaux of the Regional Commissions and Specialist Commissions, in application of the new candidate evaluation procedure adopted last year.

The plan was for the elections to each governing body to be held electronically, sequentially, and position by position. This would allow the Assembly, if necessary, to agree on a different method, depending on the number of applications and the configuration of the election.

Each Regional Commission was invited to announce its nominations for the new Bureau and the Council on the evening of the conference (Monday, 21 May 2018), together with the final list of selected candidates for the Specialist Commissions.

13. Proposal of candidates for the elections (Closed session)

Council:

The Delegates of the Region agreed on the following proposed name:

Dr Majid Al Qassimi (United Arab Emirates)

Bureau of the Regional Commission:

The Delegates of the Region agreed on the following proposed names:

President: Dr Elias Ibrahim (Lebanon)

Vice-President: Dr Fajar Salloum (Bahrain)

Vice-President: Dr Ali Doweriej (Saudi Arabia)

Secretary General: Dr Mahmoud Al Hanatleh (Jordan)

Specialist Commissions:

No candidates were proposed from the Middle East region for any positions to any of the four Specialist Commissions. There was also no discussion on any of the proposed candidates from the other regions.

The region raised the difficulties in gaining sufficient votes for any position within the Specialist Commissions due to being a small region with relatively few voting members. Members were reminded that nominations were also being used to populate OIE Ad Hoc Groups that weren't subject to OIE Members' elections and that there was still a benefit to nominations even if they weren't elected to the Specialist Commissions. Dr Majid Al Qassimi, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, encouraged all members to provide nominations for the next round of elections to the Specialist Commissions and that a process to think of possible candidates each year in the region should be initiated.

The meeting officially ended at 5:05 p.m.

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