

17th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East
Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 1-5 October 2023

Recommendation No. 1

One Health: Coordination, Communication and Cooperation between Veterinary, Public Health and Environmental Protection Services

CONSIDERING THAT:

1. The use of the One Health approach, including effective communication with the stakeholders and the general public, will be key in the prevention of zoonotic diseases and future pandemics and other health threats such as Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR), food safety hazards and vector borne diseases;
2. The 27th Tripartite Annual Executive Meeting agreed to jointly develop a strategy and action plan to prevent future zoonotic pandemics through the One Health approach;
3. The One Health Joint Plan of Action (OH JPA), which was launched in October 2022, is a collaborative, participatory effort among FAO, UNEP, WHO and WOA and supported by scientific advice from the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) to strengthen country-level collaboration, communication, capacity building, and coordination equally across all sectors responsible for addressing health concerns at the human-animal-environment interface;
4. Operationalisation of One Health requires a “whole of society and whole of government approach” with leadership from animal, human, and environmental sectors; community, NGOs and academia involvement, including collaboration with sub-regional, regional, and global partners. It also requires inter-ministerial cooperation and data sharing as well as coordinated research;
5. Supportive political environment and legislative structure at national, regional and global levels as well as adequate financial support are key for the successful implementation of multisectoral initiatives;
6. WOA has invested significantly to play an active role in the Tripartite and later the Quadripartite collaboration on One Health, in G7, and G20, as well as during key ministerial encounters;
7. The UN General Assembly political declaration adopted on September 2023 calling for strengthening high-level international coordination allowing Members commitment to better prevent, prepare for and respond to pandemics;
8. WOA continues to ensure that guidelines, information, and key notes are regularly shared with Members, and relevant activities are organised to provide Members with all the necessary elements to work at national level and advocate to the relevant government authorities to commit and create a national platform for One Health implementation;
9. WOA’s work has already yielded positive results, one concrete example is the PVS Pathway being considered as one of the selection criteria for the Pandemic Fund applications used by the World Bank;
10. The recommendations of the Quadripartite Regional Meeting, held in Muscat in May 2023, to accelerate the implementation of One Health in Eastern Mediterranean Region and that the “Friends of One Health” group facilitates discussions and exchanges with key partners regarding the articulation of information to be included in the pandemic treaty to ensure the animal health sector is taken into account and included at all levels of the negotiations; and
11. The Regional One Health Operational Framework is aligned with the Global Quadripartite OH JPA and aims at supporting Members to accelerate the implementation of the One Health concept at national level.

THE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST

RECOMMENDS THAT:

GOVERNMENTS OF MEMBERS:

1. Recognise the importance of the One Health approach in the prevention of zoonotic diseases, future pandemics and other health threats at the animal-human-environment interface and therefore, equitably allocate sufficient and sustainable funding, domestic and international resources across health sectors to support One Health coordination activities;
2. Address legislative gaps to ensure that there is a solid legal foundation for One Health coordination and implementation, including policies and legislation that promote intersectoral collaboration and information sharing as well as integration of the environmental health considerations into animal and human health policies and programs, including at regional and subregional level;
3. Encourage and facilitate collaboration between human health, animal health, and environmental health sectors, including research and academia, through establishing or strengthening One Health platforms, plans, strategies and multisectoral coordination mechanisms and M&E frameworks;
4. Ensure the sustainability of communication and information sharing channels between sectors.

THE VETERINARY AUTHORITIES OF THE MEMBERS:

5. Recognise themselves as partners in the health sector and take advantage of the clear strategy and tools available to ensure the operationalisation of the One Health approach at national level, including being part of the "Friends of One Health" group;
6. Raise awareness on the importance of the One Health approach to foster political support, create trust with government officials, health workers, veterinarians, farmers as well as with different civil societies and stakeholders to encourage government officials prioritising it in their policies and allocating resources for the operationalisation of One Health at national level;
7. Take advantage of all the support provided by WOAHA in order to mobilise national authorities and ensure leadership at national level so that the animal health sector is well involved in the One Health agenda, responsibilities regarding One Health are appropriately shared between the relevant sectors, and the contribution of the Veterinary Services to the national, regional and global health security is well recognised by all relevant actors;
8. Invest in capacity building and training initiatives to enhance the skills and knowledge of the veterinary workforce including in the field of veterinary epidemiology ;
9. Establish comprehensive and coordinated monitoring and evaluation mechanisms to monitor the progress of implementation and to assess the impact of One Health initiatives effectively;
10. Improve risk communication and community engagement strategies to enhance public awareness and engagement in One Health issues;
11. Ensure risk-based prioritisation of actions highlighted in the OH JPA and improve financing and coordination strategies for effective implementation.

WOAHA:

12. Continue actively working to ensure that the voice of Veterinary Services is heard in all relevant political fora in which the global health governance is discussed;
13. Continue promoting strong multisectoral collaboration with FAO, UNEP and WHO through the Quadripartite Collaboration on OH supported by the scientific advice of the OHHLEP;
14. Continue to provide support to Members through the PVS Pathway, especially through IHR-PVS National Bridging Workshops (NBWs) and other One Health operational tools developed under the Tripartite Zoonosis Guide to facilitate operationalisation of the One Health approach at national level ;
15. Encourage harmonised sub-regional and regional coordination mechanisms for providing technical support, knowledge and expertise sharing to Members.