



WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH
Protecting animals, preserving our future

16th Conference of the
OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
by videoconference, 3 and 4 November 2021

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

Due to the persistence of the sensitive sanitary situation linked to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis as well as according to the OIE Council decision, following its extraordinary meeting held in June 2020, to adapt planned Regional Conferences into a virtual format, it was decided to also keep this Conference virtual. Thus, the 16th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East was held on 3 and 4 November 2021, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. (Paris time), by videoconference (via Zoom).

A total of 84 participants, comprising OIE Delegates or representatives of 17 Members of the Region and senior officials from 11 regional and international organisations, attended the Conference. In addition, representatives of the private sector as well as private veterinary organisations from the region and from the host country were present.

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

International/regional organisations: AAAID¹, AOAD², EC³, EuFMD⁴, FAO⁵, FEI⁶, France Galop, ICO⁷, ICFAW⁸, WAP⁹, WHO¹⁰.

Dr Fajer Al Salloom, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East and Delegate of Bahrain, Dr Hugo Idoyaga Benítez, President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Paraguay, Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General, Dr Jean Philippe Dop, OIE Deputy Director General “Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities”, Dr François Caya, OIE Chief of Staff, Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East, and Dr Mohamed Alhosani, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Abu Dhabi participated in the Conference. Additionally, relevant key experts and OIE technical and administrative staff also participated in this important event for the Middle East region.

WEDNESDAY 3 NOVEMBER 2021

SESSION 1: OPENING CEREMONY

Welcome remarks

The following authorities gave a welcome address:

- Dr Fajer Al Salloom, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East and Delegate of Bahrain;
- Dr Hugo Federico Idoyaga Benítez, President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates and OIE Delegate of Paraguay;
- Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General;
- H.E. Dr Ibrahim El Dukheiri, Director General of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, who kindly sent a pre-recorded message;
- H.E. Mr Issam Bin Abdallah Khalaf, Minister of Works, Municipalities Affairs & Urban Planning of Bahrain, who kindly sent a pre-recorded message;
- H.E. Mr Khaled Huneifat, Minister of Agriculture of Jordan, who kindly sent a pre-recorded message;
- H.E. Mr Abbas Hajj Hassan, Minister of Agriculture of Lebanon, who kindly sent a pre-recorded message.

¹ AAAID: Arab Authority for Agricultural Investment and Development

² AOAD: Arab Organization for Agricultural Development

³ EC: European Commission

⁴ EuFMD: European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease

⁵ FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

⁶ FEI: *Fédération équestre internationale*

⁷ ICO: International Camel Organization

⁸ ICFAW: International Coalition for Animal Welfare

⁹ WAP: World Animal Protection

¹⁰ WHO: World Health Organization

KEYNOTE SPEECH: Challenges for the implementation of the Seventh OIE Strategic Plan in the post-pandemic world of COVID-19

Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General, reminded participants about the adaptations to the OIE Seventh Strategic Plan (2021-2025) to address the current and potential new challenges faced worldwide. She also explained how the OIE saw the planning and implementation of its activities for the coming five years and emphasised the following aspects:

- The OIE Seventh Strategic Plan differs significantly from the previous ones because its development process was more inclusive, involving Members, partners, and OIE staff. It also promotes an Organisation that is more committed to explicitly stated values and guiding principles but, above all, rather than just updating the Sixth Strategic Plan, the Seventh Strategic Plan aims to create fresh momentum to continue building an Organisation ready to meet current and future challenges.
- As the new plan is less technical than previous ones, it is also more accessible to ministers, decision-makers, and a wide range of partners, including resources partners. This is in line with the OIE's active participation in political forums, such as the G7, the G20 and other high-level ministerial meetings.
- The final declaration of the G20 Health Ministers adopted in Rome is an additional recognition of the OIE key role in the international scene regarding One Health and its related matters.
- Since the creation of the Organisation, the OIE is recognised by Ministers of Agriculture and stakeholders for its importance when it comes to trade purposes. Nowadays, the Organisation is more and more recognised by the Ministers of Health, Finance and Global leaders as key partner in building global health governance. It is not always easy to ensure balance between these two key points, however, it is our challenge to bring together these two aspects of our mandate.
- The Strategic Plan has five main objectives: (1) scientific expertise; (2) transformation towards a digital model, with a data management strategy; (3) responding to the needs of Members; (4) fostering close collaboration with partners; and (5) ensuring efficiency and agility thanks to the application of modern processes and tools.
- The challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the need for more scientific expertise, in particular for assessing risks at the human/animal/environment interface, as well as the importance of strengthening existing agreements or establishing new ones with key partners to be able to work actively and in coordination for the common good.
- The need to exchange more data, including more sophisticated data, with as many partners as possible, as well as the new ways of working (namely teleworking and virtual meetings), reinforce the relevance of the OIE's commitment to a digital transformation of the Organisation.
- The prioritisation of the 5 strategic objectives will be different from what we thought 18 months ago. Undoubtedly, the digital transformation is the most urgent one. The success of the implementation of the 4 other objectives is strongly dependent to our ability to accelerate this transformation.
- At the same time, other objectives should also be addressed, including the following: expanding and strengthening wildlife expertise, ensuring the relevance of OIE programmes for its Members based on the current context, for which the OIE Training Platform is a crucial tool; and adjusting the partnership strategy, including revitalising some of the existing partnership agreements, in particular with organisations involved in wildlife or environmental issues. The partnership with WHO must also be strengthened, which is key for future discussions on the global governance of any potential health crisis. Also, the OIE's internal processes must be modernised in particular for the daily administrative and budgetary management.
- The OIE and its Members need to be active so that the contribution of the Veterinary Services to the One Health approach and the prevention of pandemics be well taken into consideration.
- There will be budgetary constraints that may impose choices in priorities especially considering that the number of staff remains the same and the level of work has increased significantly due to the new needs and priorities as well as the need to ensure regular OIE activities are delivered in order to provide our Members with the expected services. The Council members will be provided with more information at its next meeting to facilitate the decision making regarding the OIE budget revision.

- The implementation of all these activities in response to the new challenges will have a major impact, which Members must understand and accept, namely: OIE Headquarters staff will not be able to dedicate the same amount of time to “business as usual”, as staff will need to focus on all the changes that must be undertaken, and traditional activities are likely to be reduced in order to concentrate temporarily on new areas, such as: preparedness and emergencies, as well as data management.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to provide their feedback on the adaptation of OIE activities to Members’ needs and future challenges through the chat, by answering three key questions. The following conclusions were reached:

- It is key to continue to invest in Veterinary Services so to ensure they are more robust and ready for any new adverse event that may arrive.
- The COVID crisis made us to face a public health crisis, fortunately no animals’ reservoirs were identified except probably in bats but not in domestic animals. However, a next pandemic could be more critical if in addition to the animal health crisis we have also an emergency in the animal health sector. Thus, Veterinary Services must be ready to better assess the situation so that we can prevent or better prevent and control the emergence of new pathogens or new risks.
- Invest in Veterinary Services and laboratories is of paramount importance. The OIE, in addition to its programmes to control animal diseases, has significantly invest, since many years ago, in the PVS Pathway to continue providing support to its Members to better identify the strengths and weaknesses of their National Veterinary Services so that they can better fulfil the gaps. Additionally, the OIE is also progressively developing the OIE Training platform which will be an important programme that will be soon presented to Members.
- OIE Delegates are key in the role of advocating with high level authorities and stakeholder on the importance of the OIE mission and the need to invest in Veterinary Services.
- Thanks to the G20 Presidency of Saudi Arabia in 2020, the OIE is now better recognised by policymakers and leaders. It was also reiterated under the Italian Presidency. We need that such political recognition be translated into more financial resources, not only for the OIE but also at national level so that Members can invest more in education for future veterinarians and VPP, as well as in continuing education because well-trained workforce is key to ensure the robustness of Veterinary Services. Thus, future challenge is also to convince Ministers of Finance and any financial authority regarding the importance to invest in Veterinary Services.

SESSION 2: TECHNICAL TOPICS

Summary of the Animal Disease situation in the Region and the new OIE WAHIS system

Dr Paula Cáceres, Head of the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department presented an update on the animal health situation in the region, mainly covering PPR, FMD, Rabies, and AI.

Following the presentation, a plenary interactive exercise was facilitated by Dr Mohamed Alhosani, OIE Sub Regional Representative for the Middle East.

Following both the presentation and the interactive exercise, the Regional Commission concluded that:

- Regarding PPR, no major changes were observed in the distribution of the disease in the Region. Very good quality of quantitative information was reported by many countries. All the reporting countries have implemented preventive and surveillance measures. However, half of these countries do not apply any control measures in wild populations, nor do they know the status of the disease in these populations. PPR is recognised as an important wildlife disease. Thus, there is a need for all Members to also address the wildlife sector.
- Regarding FMD, the disease seems to be present and stable throughout the Region. Several Members reported having either general surveillance, targeted surveillance, monitoring, or screening in place. Some Members also have an official vaccination programme.
- When it comes to the rabies situation in the Region, both extremes of case occurrence exist, from low to high. The OIE supports its Members for the control and eradication of the disease through several mechanisms such as the endorsement of official control programmes for dog-mediated rabies. In addition to these mechanisms, a Regional approach for the elimination of dog-mediated human rabies in the Middle East has been documented and published on the OIE Regional

Representation website. Regular reporting to the OIE allows an evaluation of the advancement of the Global Strategy. Therefore, all Members are requested to update their animal health information in OIE-WAHIS and to continue reporting relevant information in due time.

- High pathogenicity avian influenza is one of the most important priority animal diseases in the Region given its economic impact, the threat it poses to public health, and the endemic situation of the disease in some areas. The occurrence and geographic distribution of the disease in poultry and in non-poultry including wild birds are apparently very different. This is likely due to a lack of proper surveillance in wildlife which is confirmed by the very limited number of outbreaks historically reported in wild birds in the Region. Considering the epidemiological role that wild birds can play in the disease dynamics, the OIE encourages its Members to improve surveillance in wildlife, as also highlighted in the recently approved OIE Wildlife Health Framework.
- Members' transparency and timely reporting of animal diseases are critical for effective control and potential eradication of animal diseases in the region.
- The main reason identified by Members for delayed reporting to the OIE seems to be the difficulties in the process of collecting and validating data before submission. Members were encouraged to always contact the OIE when they have delays in reporting so that, if needed and possible, some support be provided by the OIE or at least to take note that the report will arrive later so to avoid duplicating the reminders.
- Submission of aquatic animal health information is an integral part of compliance with OIE standards. The OIE will need to provide training and support tools to the Focal Points (aquatic animals) to enhance reporting of aquatic animal diseases in the region to the OIE. With the launch of the OIE WAHIS an eLearning training was also launched in which there are different exercises for aquatic Focal Points.
- Members should ensure continuous surveillance and monitoring of animal diseases to take timely action to control further spread of diseases.
- Members should make full use of the new OIE-WAHIS platform as it has several user-friendly features including advanced analytical and mapping tools that allows better visualization of the spatio-temporal disease data and such information can be valuable in risk assessment for animal disease control and animal trade.
- The success of OIE-WAHIS depends on the use of the platform by Members as well as of the quality of the information it contains. The OIE exhort its Members to actively use the platform to report animal disease events in a transparent and timely manner. From its side, the OIE will continue providing training and technical support to the Members in the region on the use of the new system.

The Socioeconomics of animal health: Direct and indirect costs of animal diseases outbreaks. Lessons learnt in the region

Representatives from Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Kuwait presented their experience in managing Rift Valley Fever, HPAI, and Glanders crisis respectively. They provided details regarding the challenges faced during the disease's crisis, the socioeconomic impacts, and how they managed the situation.

Following these presentations, a plenary interactive exercise including some polls was facilitated by Dr Matthew Stone, OIE Consultant, and Ms Edna Kallon, OIE Technical Lead of the Global Burden for Animal Diseases (GBADs) project, that allowed the following conclusions by the Regional Commission:

- Good understanding of the socio-economic impacts of transboundary animal disease is key in supporting the investment case for risk management through implementation of OIE's international standards.
- FMD, LSD, HPAI, and Brucellosis seem to be the animal diseases that have had a significant socioeconomic impact in food security, zoonoses, and livelihood in the Region in the last 10 years.
- The Ministries of Agriculture, Finance and Public Health as well as some private partners and regional governments were identified as the main resources providers in the Region when it comes to managing animal diseases crisis. The OIE encourages Veterinary Services to work in whole of government capacity with the various relevant Ministries and to ensure a close collaboration between the Ministry of Agriculture and the Finance.
- Even before the COVID crisis had its impact on global, regional, and national economies, financial resources for animal health and welfare were tightly constrained. The ability to clearly articulate and quantify the benefits to livelihoods and food security from increased production, and for export

earnings, relative to the costs of disease control interventions is fundamental. This is how commercial investors, governments and development agencies all operate: by considering return on investment.

- In the region, the most important factor in prioritising investment towards the prevention or control of animal diseases are impact on human health, food security, protection of export trade.
- The region expressed the need for more information in terms of effects on national food security, costs of control measures, effect on wider economy (jobs), basic data on disease incidence and prevalence in order to facilitate making a case for financial investment in the prevention and control of an animal diseases.
- There is a strong need for capability development around the social/economic analysis across the Members.
- Members were invited to follow the progress of the Global Burden of Animal Diseases programme which first priority is to ensure accurate and complete animal population data, this is a matter by Members in the annual report to WAHIS, thus, Members' support on this will be much appreciated when annual reports will start.

Aquatic Animal Health

During this session participants were provided with some examples on regional collaboration on aquatic animal health thanks to a presentation from Dr Jing Wang, Regional Veterinary Officer at the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, regarding the Regional Collaboration Framework on Aquatic Animal Health in Asia. An important point was also presented by Dr Fares Al Ghamedi, from the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, regarding the Aquatic Middle East Network (AQMENET) during which the importance of strengthening efforts on aquatic animal health through the operationalisation of an aquatic regional network was highlighted. The importance of preparedness and response was also mentioned using the example of the Qaraoun Lake incident. Finally, Dr Stian Johnsen, Chargé de mission at the OIE Standards Department, presented an overview of the OIE Strategy for Aquatic Animal Health (2021-2025) and how it can support countries in the Middle East to improve aquatic animal health and welfare, contribute to sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security, thereby supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

At the end of the session, the participants were asked to reflect on the topic using the Mentimeter tool. The following conclusion from the Regional Commission were noted:

- OIE Focal Point for Aquatic Animals are the most interested to receive information on progress regarding the implementation of the OIE aquatic initiatives.
- Participants would be interested in hearing more from OIE on a) guidance to use project outcomes in respective Members; b) overall progress to implement the strategy; c) opportunities to contribute to specific activities (e.g. working groups, planning workshops); d) summaries or case studies of specific activities; and e) final reports and outputs.
- Social media (e.g., Twitter), webinars and Focal Point seminars, Regional Commission Conferences, Newsletter and OIE website have been identified as the best ways to share information on OIE aquatic initiatives with interested personnel.
- The AQMENET workplan should include laboratory diagnostic procedures, information and data collection, epidemiology and risk analysis, trade requirements and pollution impact in Aquaculture as main priorities.
- Out of the eight activities proposed under objective two (Capacity building), development of a disease identification guide for mobile devices and developing public-private partnerships were suggested as the activities that Members think would make the greatest regional impact.
- Formalise procedures for a coordinated OIE approach to diseases emergencies is identified as the priority for objective three (Resilience).

OIE Wildlife Health Framework

Dr Sophie Muset, Ebola Project Lead Programme and Technical Coordinator at the OIE Preparedness and Resilience Department, informed participants about the importance of wildlife health management and the implementation of the OIE Wildlife Health Framework (WHF).

Dr Rupert Woods from the OIE Wildlife Working Group, informed participants about wildlife surveillance and reporting using Australia's wildlife health surveillance framework as an example of how this can be achieved.

Following the interactive exercises proposed to participants, the Regional Commission concluded that:

- Of the six WHF objectives, (i) strengthening capacity in wildlife health management; (ii) improving quality data collection, reporting, analysis, and use and (iii) promotion of multisectoral coordination and collaboration are the highest priorities for Members to implement.
- Members were exhorted to report wildlife diseases and in case of doubt to contact the OIE.
- The main challenges for Veterinary Services in the Region to communicate and work with other wildlife health stakeholders are lack of awareness, data collection, prioritisation, lack of a formal national communication framework, poor knowledge of wildlife diseases, lack of reporting system, and allocation of sustainable resources.
- OIE could support in overcoming those challenges through capacity building activities addressed to interested parties and mainly to the Focal Points, development of advocacy and awareness campaigns and tools as well as, development of guidelines to better support coordination and sustained multisectoral engagement at national level.
- Networking is a key method for improving awareness and sharing information and technical expertise on wildlife health across the region. The OIE is committed to supporting its Members to develop a solid and efficient network supporting wildlife health for the Region.
- Veterinary Services must be involved in wildlife health related activities. In many countries such role is not under the Veterinary Services, thus, collaboration between the different departments and relevant national authorities is of paramount importance to ensure well addressing wildlife surveillance and reporting.
- Progressively, Members' authorities are understanding the importance of ensuring wildlife disease reporting considering the great risk it represents for the domestic sector and for the public health while at the same time, it is also urgent to protect wildlife considering the importance of the biodiversity which is also an asset for our future. Thus, there is an urgent need to also consider the key role of the Veterinary Services in protecting the ecosystems.
- Communication and awareness are key to raise information that people is not aware or not completely familiar with so to move forward and implement change.
- Every country's biosecurity system is different, however, there is a need for rapid and timely access to information and intelligence to remain the same whether it is for small projects, a local area, state, territory, the country itself, or to ensure regional or global situation awareness.
- The OIE Wildlife Health Framework is a significant global enabling that needs to be supported by all parties as a global priority.

Veterinary workforce development towards resilient veterinary service

During this session, Dr Barbara Alessandrini, Head of the OIE Capacity-Building Department, gave an overview of OIE support for Veterinary Services capacity building, including the OIE Platform for the Training of the Veterinary Services and Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS). Dr David Sherman, Programme Coordinator at the OIE Capacity-Building Department, provided details regarding the importance of veterinary workforce assessment, planning and development. And Ms Jenifer Lasley, Project Coordinator from the OIE Preparedness and Resilience Department, presented the Global Laboratory Leadership Programme (GLLP) an additional tool supporting Members capacity building. These presentations were followed by an interactive session facilitated by Ms Sonia Fèvre, Programme Manager from the Capacity Building Department, and concluded by some remarks from Dr Fajer Al Salloom, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, and OIE Delegate of Bahrain.

The following conclusions were noted:

- The Training Platform is a landmark feature which will provide online learning opportunities for 16 competency packages.
- The OIE is currently developing new tools to assist Members in workforce assessment and planning, and in creating an enabling environment for effective integration of VPPs into the veterinary workforce.
- The GLLP programme supports the veterinary workforce development through a multisectoral collaboration between the OIE and five other partner organizations working with laboratories with public health impact to foster and mentor laboratory leaders to build, strengthen, and sustain national laboratory systems. All the material developed under the GLLP programme is being mapped across the OIE training programme in the OIE Training portal, in the different competency packages. There is a huge quantity and qualitative training material for laboratory leaders, Delegates were encouraged to have a look to it.
- Members were invited to directly interact with the Regional and Subregional Representations for any further information and support they may wish in terms of capacity building and veterinary workforce development.
- Members are in different stages of advancement for workforce development, requiring various approaches and potential support from the OIE.
- Management of veterinary and aquatic services, emergency management, risk analysis, emergent risks, laboratories, and One Health have been identified as the main priorities regarding learning needs for national Veterinary Service in the Region.
- As highlighted by the G20 leaders, it is key to strengthen national health systems through enhance health curricula and training material. Veterinary Services and laboratories are components of the health system.

AMR activities

Dr Rebecca Hibbard, Chargée de mission from the Antimicrobial Resistance and Veterinary Products Department informed participants about the Tripartite activities to combat AMR while Dr Delfy Góchez, Data Management Officer, also from the same Department provided details regarding the OIE Global Database on AMU and the Tripartite AMR country self-assessment survey (TrACSS). Finally, Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East, gave a brief overview regarding the implementation of AMR activities in the Middle East. An interactive session was also conducted to get some feedback from participants.

The following conclusions were noted:

- The biggest challenges faced by Veterinary Services to control the spread of AMR in the Region are legislation, lack of registration of antimicrobials in the veterinary authority, the implementation of the One Health concept, lack of Veterinary Services monitoring the use of antimicrobials in animals, absence of scientific data regarding veterinary products resistance, lack of awareness campaigns in general and tailored awareness, illegal use of veterinary products, no surveillance on AMR, lack of guidelines, need for more multisectoral collaboration, and the lack of national expertise.
- Post marketing surveillance for veterinary product quality seems to be one of the most challenging actions to carry in the region due to the need for qualifications and tools.

- The most important actions in the Region to tackle the spread of AMR are surveillance, monitoring of antimicrobial use, legislation, and promotion of AMR awareness campaigns.
- Veterinary Services are so far actively engaged in joint coordination and implementation of AMR-related activities with other sectors (humans and environment), implementation of procedures to authorise veterinary products, and development of national action plans.
- In order to better support Members to overcome the challenges identified in terms of controlling AMR spread in the Region, Members requested the OIE to prioritise on capacity building activities, development of guidelines and manuals, increase of awareness and communication in general as well as political awareness, support in the establishment of PPP, researching, development of a list of antibiotics which should not be used in specific species, and standards development.
- In the perspective of a future pandemic treaty that could be decided in the coming Extraordinary WHO Assembly, AMR will be certainly a component of this international new legal instrument. It is a success that gradually more countries are well engaged in such a control programme.
- Adopting legislation and developing guidelines can take time however, starting awareness campaigns can be done immediately and OIE has developed a lot of material that is available to its Members, thus, Delegates were encouraged to use it.

SESSION 3: REGIONAL COMMISSION INTERNAL DISCUSSION AND CLOSING

The last session of the Conference was dedicated to Regional Commission internal matters. The Session was chaired by Dr Fajer Al Salloom, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East and Delegate of Bahrain.

Several internal topics of relevance to the Regional Commission were discussed and some main points highlighted/concluded as follows:

- The OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East decided to implement the Regional Core Group mechanism. Its main task is to better link and coordinate the work of the Bureau of the Regional Commission for the Middle East (the Bureau), in line with the Council advise and with the support of the OIE Regional and Sub-Regional Representations (and the OIE HQ when needed) to ensure regional needs are addressed and to facilitate regional inputs to the work of the OIE. Communication and coordination between the OIE Regional and Sub-Regional Representations, the OIE HQs, and the Members in the Region will be enhanced by the establishment of this RCG. ToRs will be developed to better define the functioning of such mechanism.
- The regional GF-TADs strategy was reactivated in the region, the Seventh Regional Steering Committee was held In October 2020 virtually. During this meeting the relevance of the GF-TADs coordination mechanism for the region was confirmed, the importance to work with the private sector was recognised and priority TADs for the region were reviewed. The new GF-TADs Strategy 2021-2025 was launched on 2 November 2021 at the occasion of the 12th Global Steering Committee. Exchanges with other regions are encouraged to coordinate and share experiences. The key to success will be the engagement of countries in control of priority TADs and indicating their needs to receive targeted support.
- A summary of all the activities carried out by the Regional and Subregional Representation to better support Members were provided.
- Delegates of Egypt, Bahrain and Saudi Arabia expressed their willing to host the 17th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission in 2023. The three Members were invited to discuss among them and to bring the discussion to the RCG to decide who will host the next Conference. The final decision will be communicated/discussed during the meeting of the Regional Commission during the General Session.

Closing ceremony

Dr Monique Eloit thanked all the participants for the two days of interactive and productive discussion. She also thanked the three Members that proposed to host the next Regional Conference, hopefully in face-to-face format. She highlighted that the active participation and reactions of Members during the two days interactive sessions showed that topics in the agenda were of relevance to the region and that presentations were of interest to participants which means that the Conference was a success. She underlined that all the comments and inputs of participants including those in the chat box are of great importance and very useful for the OIE to regularly assess if the programmes and their related activities are well aligned with Members' needs. She thanked all the speakers for the clear and comprehensive presentations aiming at updating Members regarding OIE activities. She also thanked the interpreters for their great support. Special thanks were also expressed by the Director General to the President of the OIE who joined the Conference despite the challenging time zone difference.

Dr Eloit noted that it was clear that the OIE was becoming a key actor at global level when it comes to addressing current global challenges. She proudly recognised that OIE has gradually gotten prepared to well respond to those challenges. She encouraged all Members to stay united and to ensure cooperation which is the key for success in the current global situation. She concluded by hoping to meet soon again all the Delegates as, thanks to this kind of interaction we can all advance and make sure that the OIE provides the most appropriate support to its Members.

Finally, the President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, Dr Fajer Al Salloom, thanked the Director General, the OIE President and all the participants for their active participation as well as, all the colleagues that made sure this Conference was a success. She declared the Conference officially closed and wished everybody good continuation in their activities.