

**5th Conference
of the
OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East**

FINAL REPORT

**Muscat, Oman
3 - 6 October 1999**

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List of abbreviations

- AOAD : Arab Organization for Agricultural Development
- EMPRES : Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases
- EU : European Union
- FAO : Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
- GREP : Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (FAO)
- I&R System : Identification and Registration System
- OIE : Office International des Epizooties
- MRL : Maximum Residue Level
- MZCC : Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Centre
- MZCP : Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Programme
- NWS : New world screwworm
- OWS : Old world screwworm
- SIT : Sterile insect technique
- SPS : WTO Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement
- WHO : World Health Organization
- WTO : World Trade Organization

Introduction

1. On the invitation of the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, the 5th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East was held in Muscat from 3 to 6 October 1999.
2. Fifty-seven Delegates and observers from fifteen OIE Member countries and four international or regional organisations attended the Conference. The Rapporteurs for Items I and II, Mr João Magalhães, from the World Trade Organization, and Dr Georgios Neophytou, from the Cypriot Department of Veterinary Services, also participated in the proceedings of the Conference (Appendix I). As a new OIE Member Country, Yemen participated for the first time in an OIE Regional Conference.

Sunday, 3 October 1999

Opening Ceremony

3. The conference was inaugurated at the Grand Hyatt Hotel, Muscat, with the reading of a verse from the Holy Koran.
4. His Excellency Dr Ahmed bin Khalfan Al-Rawahi, Minister for Agriculture and Fisheries of the Sultanate of Oman, then welcomed the participants and thanked the OIE for having chosen his country to host the 5th Regional Conference. He extended warm thanks to His Excellency the Minister for Regional Municipalities and Environment, for his patronage at the inaugural ceremony of the Conference.
5. The Minister remarked that since its creation in 1924, the OIE had made considerable steps in achieving its goal in strengthening scientific and technical cooperation, with a view to improving animal health worldwide, in harmonising relevant legislation and regulations regarding quality control for world trade in animals and animal products, and in monitoring epidemics and zoonotic diseases. He added that the agenda of the Conference reflected the targets of the OIE and hoped that the development of regional and international trade in livestock would be furthered.
6. Dr Al-Rawahi then singled out one of the items on the agenda, namely animal identification systems and their importance for disease surveillance, the management of pastoral herds, production and sustainable means. He underlined that animal health was not only crucial for the development of animal products, but also vital for public health protection and animal products. The role of the OIE was pivotal in this respect and he encouraged Member Countries to coordinate their efforts. He added that the Omani Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries had

extrapolated realistic plans for disease prevention through national vaccination programmes to guarantee safety measures and to implement the security of veterinary drugs by the Government and the private sector.

7. On behalf of his Government, the Minister wished all participants every success with their deliberations during the Conference and a pleasant stay in Oman.
8. Dr Jean Blancou, Director General of the Office International des Epizooties, expressed his appreciation to the Authorities of the Sultanate of Oman for hosting the Regional Conference. The Director General recalled the particular relevance for the region of the technical items that would be discussed during the week. He stressed that with the implementation of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement, the role of Veterinary Services had become crucial to the flow and security of world trade in animals and animal products. Linked to this were the improvement and harmonisation of animal identification systems for disease surveillance, which were also especially significant for the Member Countries in the Middle East region, due to the growing importance of imports and exports of animals and animal products. Dr Blancou concluded by wishing the countries of the region every success with their Conference.
9. Dr Sultan A. Sultan Al-Khalaf, OIE Delegate from Kuwait and President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, welcomed participants and warmly thanked the Sultanate of Oman for inviting the Regional Commission for the Middle East to conduct its meeting in Muscat, and Dr Al-Suleimany and his collaborators for having provided such excellent organisation.
10. The President of the Regional Commission briefly outlined the many challenges to be addressed in the region, naming certain epizootics that have caused serious economic losses in parts of the region and are threatening animal health. Proven technologies, methods and systems have to be adopted to keep abreast of the national animal health services of other OIE Regional Commissions. Dr Al-Khalaf stressed that priority should be given to epidemiological surveillance systems, improved animal health information management, communication technologies, management of animal health emergencies, standardised diagnostic techniques and risk analysis.
11. Dr Al-Khalaf mentioned the establishment in Beirut, Lebanon, of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East, coordinated by Dr Ghazi Yehya. He reminded participants that the success of this office in achieving its set objectives depended on the region's commitment to promote its causes.

12. In conclusion, Dr Al-Khalaf reiterated the need to urgently devise and implement regionally coordinated animal disease surveillance and control programmes, in order to effectively contain, control and subsequently eradicate economically important diseases in the region, and to reduce the risks of transboundary animal diseases.
13. His Excellency Dr Ahmed bin Khalfan Al-Rawahi subsequently declared the Conference officially open.
14. The texts of the above speeches were distributed to the Delegates.

Election of the Conference Committee

15. Participants elected the following Conference Committee:

Chairperson	: Dr Rashid M.S. Al-Suleimany (Oman)
Vice-Chairperson	: Dr Ali Arab (United Arab Emirates)
Rapporteur General	: Dr Pavlos Economides (Cyprus)

Adoption of the Provisional Agenda and Timetable

16. The Provisional Agenda and Timetable were adopted (Appendices II and III).

Designation of Chairpersons and Rapporteurs

17. Chairpersons and Rapporteurs were designated for the Technical Items as follows:

Item I:	Dr Mohamed Ibrahim Allam (Egypt), Chairperson Dr Asaad Abu Al Ragheb (Jordan), Rapporteur
Item II:	Dr Jama Ahmed Hussain (Somalia), Chairperson Dr Ahmad Kazemi (Iran), Rapporteur
Item III:	Dr Ali Abdulla Arab (United Arab Emirates), Chairperson Dr Ghazi Yehya (Lebanon), Rapporteur

Animal health status in the region in 1999

18. Dr Ali Arab, the Session Chairperson, invited Delegates of Member Countries and observers to report on any changes that had taken place regarding the animal health status of their country during the first

semester of 1999 and in particular since the 67th General Session of the OIE International Committee.

19. The Member Countries and observers reported on these changes and also gave details on the national Veterinary Services and disease control programmes. The complete reports were distributed to the participants.
20. The animal health situation in the region can be summarised as follows, according to the reports, written or spoken, presented to the Conference.

List A Diseases

Foot and mouth disease

21. Foot and mouth disease (FMD) caused by virus type O was circulating in the following countries or territories: Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, the Palestinian National Authority, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Turkey and Yemen. Virus type A was isolated in Iran and Turkey.
22. Virus type Asia 1 was identified by the OIE World Reference Laboratory for Foot and Mouth Disease (Pirbright, United Kingdom), in samples received from Iran in September 1999.
23. Cyprus, Egypt, Sudan and Syria reported the absence of the disease during the first half of 1999. In Egypt, the results of serological surveillance carried out in February 1999 on nearly 2 600 large or small ruminants to evaluate their level of immunity to virus type O after completion of the vaccination campaign, showed that 88% of these animals were protected.

Rinderpest

24. None of the countries in the region reported the presence of rinderpest on their territory. Egypt, which declared itself provisionally free from the disease in July 1996, continued its epidemiological surveillance programme, with the taking of blood samples from nearly 1 400 bovines and buffalo aged between one and two years. Only four of these animals were found to carry antibodies.
25. Turkey declared Anatolia provisionally free from rinderpest, with effect from March 1999.
26. Jordan and Lebanon are in the process of declaring their countries provisionally free from rinderpest.

Peste des petits ruminants

27. The following countries reported the appearance of outbreaks of peste des petits ruminants: Iraq, Jordan, Oman, the Palestinian National Authority and Saudi Arabia.

Bluetongue

28. At the end of July/beginning of August, three outbreaks of bluetongue occurred in Turkey, in the Lalapasa district (Edirne province) close to the border with Bulgaria. Only sheep were affected (62 cases).
29. Serological tests conducted in Cyprus revealed the presence of 41 sheep carrying bluetongue virus antibodies.

Sheep pox and goat pox

30. Outbreaks of sheep pox and goat pox were reported in Bahrain, Egypt, Iraq, Iran, Jordan, Oman, the Palestinian National Authority Territory, Saudi Arabia and Turkey. In Egypt, the previous outbreak dated back to March 1991. In Kuwait, there was a particularly severe outbreak, involving Merino sheep imported from Australia and awaiting slaughter.

Newcastle disease

31. Outbreaks of Newcastle disease were reported in Iran, Jordan, Kuwait, the Palestinian National Authority Territory, Saudi Arabia and Syria. In Kuwait, there was a single outbreak, involving three parrots.

List B Diseases**Anthrax**

32. Fourteen outbreaks of anthrax were reported in Turkey, and several other countries reported sporadic cases during the year.

Echinococcosis/hydatidosis

33. In Cyprus, over 6 500 dogs were treated for echinococcosis. Five sheep, two bovines and a goat were found to be carrying hydatid cysts at the abattoir.

Rabies

34. Cases of rabies were reported in most of the countries, namely Saudi Arabia (1 dog, 2 cats, 1 fox, 1 sheep and 1 goat), Turkey (67 dogs, 3 bovines, 1 sheep) and in the Sudan for most species including camels. In Oman, the disease was reported in cattle, sheep and camels, as well as in foxes, which are now the main reservoir species.

Paratuberculosis

35. Ten cases of paratuberculosis were diagnosed in Qatar.

Old World screwworm

36. Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon and Oman maintained their surveillance system for Old World screwworm, and cases were reported in Bahrain and Iraq. The Delegate of Iraq gave a full account of the situation in his country since 1996.

Bovine brucellosis

37. Cases occurred in Iraq, Lebanon, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The disease is endemic in the Sudan; five outbreaks were reported in many animal species this year, the last being in August 1999. Control programmes are being implemented in several countries of the region.

Anaplasmosis

38. Seventy-seven cases of anaplasmosis were reported in Egypt and two in Qatar.

Babesiosis

39. A total of 9 866 cases of babesiosis were diagnosed and treated in Egypt.

Bovine tuberculosis

40. A total of 736 bovines and buffalo gave a positive response to the intradermal tuberculin test in Egypt.

Infectious bovine rhinotracheitis

41. Cattle carrying infectious bovine rhinotracheitis virus antibodies were discovered in seven herds in Cyprus. Two outbreaks of the disease, involving calves, occurred in Egypt.

Theileriosis

42. In Egypt, 4 000 cases of theileriosis were diagnosed and treated. In Qatar, 55 cases were reported.
43. Oman reported mortality in imported cattle.

Caprine and ovine brucellosis

44. Iraq, Kuwait, Qatar and Turkey reported outbreaks of caprine and ovine brucellosis. Brucellosis in Cyprus has been eradicated since 1985. During the annual surveillance programme, some cases of *B. melitensis* have been found in sheep, goats and cattle.

Contagious caprine pleuropneumonia

45. Qatar reported 54 outbreaks of contagious caprine pleuropneumonia. There were five outbreaks in Bahrain and four in Kuwait.

Scrapie

46. In Cyprus, the presence of scrapie was confirmed in nine new flocks. A total of over 1 500 sheep and goats with clinical signs were slaughtered and their carcasses destroyed. A programme is in place for introducing genetically resistant animals.

Maedi-visna

47. In Cyprus, sheep carrying maedi-visna virus antibodies were discovered in two flocks. A new vaccine (manufactured in Iceland) is being tested.

Diseases of poultry

48. Most of the countries in the region reported infectious bursal disease outbreaks.
49. In Turkey, the animal health regulations applicable to hatcheries were extended to include testing for *Salmonella enteritidis* and *Mycoplasma meleagridis*.

Other Diseases**Leishmaniosis**

50. The disease in dogs in Cyprus was considered to be a potential risk for human health.

Sura

51. In Oman, parasitism by *Trypanosoma evansi* was considered to be a disease of increasing importance for camels.

Crimean Congo fever

52. Iraq and Oman reported cases of the disease in animals and an investigation has been carried out on its potential animal reservoir. Cases in humans also occurred.

Discussion

53. In response to the Delegate of the Sudan's request for details on the animal health situation in various countries (Egypt, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar and the United Arab Emirates), these countries provided

information concerning in particular the international movement of animals.

54. The Delegate of Cyprus drew the attention of Member Countries of the region to the importance of surveillance of bluetongue and the need to inform the OIE.
55. In response to a request from the Delegates of Oman and the Sudan for clarification concerning the control of peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and brucellosis in Iraq, as well as the origin of the rinderpest outbreak in 1994, the Delegate of Iraq explained that PPR was controlled by stamping-out and brucellosis by vaccination, depending on the prevalence of the diseases. He added that the last rinderpest outbreak in Iraq followed the importation of an infected bull from India in 1994.

ITEM I

The Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and its impact on trade in animals and animal products in the Middle East

56. Dr Mohamed Allam, Chairperson of the Session, briefly introduced the Rapporteur for this item, Mr João Magalhães.
57. Mr Magalhães introduced his presentation with a brief outline of the SPS Agreement provisions. He stipulated that the SPS Agreement affirms the right of World Trade Organization (WTO) Members to restrict international trade when necessary to protect animal life or health. At the same time, it aims to ensure that unnecessary animal health regulations are not used as an excuse for protecting domestic producers from trade competition. He added that in order to avoid that SPS measures be used as disguised trade restrictions, the SPS Agreement requires such measures to be based on science. They may be applied only to the extent necessary to protect animal health. Furthermore, they may not arbitrarily or unjustifiably discriminate between countries where identical or similar conditions prevail.
58. The Rapporteur explained that a certain number of the Agreement's provisions are of significant importance for developing countries and Middle East countries in particular. He pointed out that these provisions relate not only to technical assistance and special and differential treatment, but especially to international harmonisation, equivalence and regionalisation. Moreover, the SPS Committee is a privileged forum for discussion and possible resolution of trade problems, which countries cannot resolve by simple bilateral discussions.

59. Mr Magalhães subsequently reported on the analysis of the eight responses to the questionnaire, which shows a need for the intensification of technical assistance and cooperation for the countries in the Middle East. Moreover, improved coordination among the different services dealing with trade-related animal health issues and between these services and the food safety and plant protection areas is indispensable for the accurate implementation of the SPS Agreement. The Rapporteur concluded by underlining that it is essential that Middle East WTO Members identify their National Notification Authority and Enquiry Point and notify their draft SPS measures. He added that countries negotiating accession to the WTO should be encouraged to do the same.
60. The Chairperson congratulated Mr Magalhães on his informative and stimulating presentation. He then invited Dr Bernard Vallat, President of the OIE Code Commission, to give a short report on this Commission.

**Presentation by the President of the OIE
International Animal Health Code Commission**

61. Dr Vallat began his presentation by briefly outlining the functioning of the Code Commission from the Ad hoc Group to the draft Resolution.
62. The President of the OIE Code Commission recalled the increase in importance of the OIE in international trade in animals and animal products, and especially of OIE activities relating to standardisation. He then shortly described the procedures followed regarding draft modifications of *International Animal Health Code* chapters and the drawing up of draft Resolutions, emphasising the role of the Code Commission itself, the Ad hoc Group(s) and of Member Countries.

Discussion

63. The Chairperson thanked Dr Vallat for his interesting report and invited comments and questions on the two presentations from the floor.
64. The Representative of the FAO recalled that the unstable political situation of certain countries in the region did not allow them to fully participate in international trade in animals and animal products. This is to be regretted, considering that countries, such as Somalia and the Sudan, with 140 million ruminants, i.e. 70% of ruminants in the Arab world, were disadvantaged in world trade competition. The Delegates of these two countries asked the Rapporteur to give his views on this matter. They also wished to know, in particular, which of the 178 disputes carried before the WTO concerned developing countries.

65. Mr Magalhães replied that the number of disputes concerning developing countries (between these countries or with developed countries) was similar to those amongst developed countries. He added that historically, the first dispute carried before the WTO concerned a developing country, namely India against the United States of America. India had won the case. The Rapporteur regretted that the existing situation in Somalia and the Sudan had an influence on the trade of these two countries, but reminded participants that in spite of this handicap, other developing countries succeeded in exporting their products, and that these countries represented two-thirds of the WTO Member Countries.
66. The Rapporteur noted the firm resolve of developing countries to participate in trade. He encouraged them to forget their differences and make a joint effort to adhere to the rules, as, for example, the 'Cairns Group' had done. He specified that the new Director General of the WTO had called upon the developed WTO Members to eliminate tariffs on products imported from least developed countries. Mr Magalhães stressed the importance of international standards under the WTO/SPS Agreement and recalled that WTO developing country Members were amongst the most firm supporters of this approach during the negotiation of the Agreement. In these countries' view, international standards were the best means to avoid unjustified trade discrimination.
67. The Delegate of the Sudan observed that the situation of the Veterinary Services in his country and in Somalia are very different and cannot be compared. The Representative of the FAO acknowledged the truth of this and indicated that he had only linked these two countries as an example of important potential exporters in the Middle East, due to the size of their herds.
68. The Delegate of the Sudan also recalled that industrialised countries could at times present a considerable health risk for developing countries. He mentioned the case of infectious bursal disease, bovine spongiform encephalopathy and dioxine, and requested information on the measures undertaken by the WTO to protect developing countries.
69. Mr Magalhães acknowledged that some WTO Members had not fully adhered to the rules in the 'dioxine crisis' and had not notified the WTO immediately regarding the emergency measures taken to control the situation. He, however, reiterated that the WTO SPS Committee provided a privileged forum to assist developing countries to avoid receiving less favourable treatment than industrialised countries. He noted the recent success of developing countries with regard to two issues: proposed maximum residue limits of aflatoxin in products imported into the European Union (EU) and an EU ban on imports of fish and fish

products from certain developing countries because of human cholera outbreaks. After having raised the issues in the SPS Committee, these countries had obtained an increase in the threshold of EU proposed residue levels for aflatoxins to meet the 'Maximum Residue Level' (MRL) proposed by the Codex. The EU MRLs were, in fact, a considerable disadvantage for exports from developing countries to the EU. Likewise, the EU import ban due to the cholera outbreaks was lifted.

70. The Delegate of the Sudan readily admitted that developing countries could benefit considerably from their accession to the WTO. He asked for details on the nature of reports to be provided to the WTO and OIE.
71. Mr Magalhães recalled that the reports on the animal health situation must be submitted only to the OIE (and not to the WTO). The WTO should receive only notification of draft measures or emergency measures if they differ from those stipulated in the OIE *International Animal Health Code* and if they have a significant impact on trade.
72. The Delegate of Iran suggested that the WTO Representative consider the need for topical training courses for the countries in the region.
73. In conclusion, Dr Yehya, Coordinator of the Regional Representation for the Middle East, informed participants that the Representation in Beirut would shortly be translating the entire *Code* into Arabic.
74. The Chairperson of the Session asked for volunteers to form a group to prepare Recommendations on Technical Item I. Dr Bernard Vallat (President of the OIE Code Commission), Dr Ghazi Yehya (Coordinator of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East), Dr Thuny Obaid Al-Shukaily (Oman) and Dr Mohamed A'Aziz (Sudan) agreed to assist the Chairperson, Dr Mohamed Allam and the Rapporteur, Mr Magalhães in the preparation of these Recommendations.

Monday, 4 October 1999

ITEM II

Systems of animal identification (ear tagging, branding, etc.) and their importance for disease surveillance

75. The Chairperson of the Session, Dr Jama Hussain, introduced Dr Georgios Neophytou, Rapporteur for this item, and called upon him to present his comprehensive report.
76. Dr Neophytou began his presentation by giving an overview of responses to a questionnaire that was sent to all OIE Member Countries of the

region in order to establish statistics on their animal identification and registration schemes. He stated that reports were received from nine Member Countries: Bahrain, Cyprus, Egypt, Iran, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Turkey.

77. The Rapporteur specified that according to the information collected from the responses, only Turkey had an official identification scheme for cattle and small ruminants. All countries stated that any suspicious case found in abattoirs can be traced back.
78. After discussing the methods of animal identification, including tattooing, branding, ear tagging and microchipping, Dr Neophytou described the requirements of the Identification and Registration (I&R) System in the Member States of the European Union, comprising double ear marking, computerised database, animal passports and individual registers on the holdings.
79. The Rapporteur concluded by stressing that an efficient and fully operational I&R System can be very important in epidemiological surveys of animal diseases and beneficial to contagious disease control. He added that it can also be an essential component of an optional meat inspection programme regarding tracing back of animals contaminated with drug or chemical residues.

Discussion

80. The Chairperson thanked Dr Neophytou for his informative report and invited discussion from the floor.
81. On the request of the Delegate of the Sudan, the Rapporteur gave additional technical information on the different identification systems of large animals.
82. In response to a request from the Delegate of Kuwait for clarification on the identification systems used in the Member States of the European Union (EU), in particular to avoid illegal animal movement, the Rapporteur remarked that not all systems are operational and harmonised as yet, but this must be the case by 1 January 2000. Each Member Country has to assure the traceability of their animals and animal products.
83. The FAO Representative desired that countries of the region seriously study the identification of horses, as their description differed in Europe and in the Middle East. Another specific problem was the identification of camels. He added that the FAO was about to prepare a regional manual for animal identification and that it would standardise the nomenclature used in the region for marking horses.

84. The Delegate of Iraq expressed his concern over the difficulties of marking animals in Islamic countries for various reasons: according to Islamic rule, sacrificed animals must not bear any exterior marking (for example, a notch or collar), and the commercial value of marked animals is reduced. Furthermore, breeders were reticent about marking, as they feared that this would facilitate taxation of their livestock. In reply, Dr Neophytou observed that certain of these objections were valid in numerous countries of the world and that they had to be taken into consideration.
85. The Delegate of Cyprus considered the present and future importance of world trade in animals and emphasised the need for proper identification.
86. Dr Yehya recalled that all race horses should be blood typed, as this was obligatory for 'Stud Book' registration. Moreover, a horse passport was still the best individual identification system for race horses. These passports should be harmonised in accordance with the Recommendations of the OIE during the 4th Regional Conference for the Middle East held in Amman (Jordan).
87. The Delegate of the Sudan indicated that in several countries, ethnic and tribal groups used different ways of marking their livestock. He considered that this could be very useful for traceability on a national level, but that on an international level, additional identification would be necessary.
88. Dr Vallat, President of the OIE International Animal Health Code Commission, commented on the identification system in France, which was applied in the brucellosis eradication programme and in the EU for internal trade, as recommended in the OIE *International Animal Health Code*. He also mentioned that the harmonisation of the system would be compulsory in the 15 countries of the EU as from 1 January 2000 with regard to cattle (individual), pigs and sheep (at the flock level). Dr Vallat added that there had been considerable resistance to this identification on the part of European farmers and that identification was often entrusted to the 'breeders' themselves, under government control.
89. The Representative of the World Trade Organization observed that identification problems could be the next barrier to trade. He stressed the importance of traceability requested by the consumer and the need for harmonisation of the identification system for all those desiring access to world trade. Considering the problems raised by the Delegate of Iraq regarding animal identification systems, Mr Magalhães added that the WTO Agreement on Technical Barriers to Trade (TBT) takes into account the cultural and ethnical differences between countries.

90. In conclusion, the FAO Representative emphasised the importance of identification systems and informed the Conference that the Regional Office of the FAO was about to prepare a document on livestock identification.
91. The Chairperson of the Session requested that a group be formed to prepare Recommendations on this Technical Item. Dr Ghazi Yehya (OIE Regional Representation), Dr Ahmad Kazemi (Iran), Dr Fadhil Jasim (Iraq) and Dr Mohammad Hassuneh (Palestinian National Authority) agreed to assist the Chairperson, Dr Jama Ahmed Hussain and the Rapporteur, Dr Neophytou, in the preparation of the Recommendations.

Presentations of international and regional organisations

92. Dr Rashid Al-Suleimany, Chairperson of this Session, invited presentations from international and regional organisations.

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

93. Dr Talib Murad Ali, Regional Animal Production and Health Officer of the FAO Regional Office for the Near East in Cairo, Egypt, commented on various issues of concern with regard to regional animal production.
94. The FAO Representative stressed that animal health, transboundary animal diseases, livestock trade, import of livestock products, quarantine and zoonotic diseases were becoming important issues with decision-makers in the countries of the region, in some cases, even becoming national issues. Diseases, such as rinderpest, peste des petits ruminants, foot and mouth disease, Rift Valley fever, Old World screwworm (OWS), brucellosis, bovine spongiform encephalopathy, and many others, were topics for discussion not only between Chief Veterinary Officers, but at higher level meetings and even amongst heads of state. He added that regional animal production was coming under extreme pressure and that due to various factors, it could no longer cope with local demands of providing sufficient animal protein.
95. Dr Ali emphasised that transboundary diseases could not be tackled by individual states alone, and that this required a collective effort and the full collaboration of specialised agencies, such as the OIE and FAO, that can play major roles in these exercises. In this context, the Representative recalled that the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases (EMPRES) was

conceived and implemented in 1994 to strengthen the FAO's role in championing the goal of enhanced world food security, by focusing on the prevention of transboundary animal diseases.

96. After mentioning the benefit to the region of the Regional Network for the Monitoring and Prevention of Animal Diseases (RADISCON), Dr Ali spoke briefly on two other items of interest, namely, Old World screwworm and the current status of the Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (GREP). He stated that the FAO had prepared a draft document for regional OWS control to complement the present programme being carried out by the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development (AOAD). Dr Ali explained that the document envisaged the consolidation of chemical OWS control and a study on the feasibility of applying the sterile insect technique for the eradication of the disease. He added that the FAO and International Atomic Energy Agency had already begun with an analysis of the genetic distance between OWS fly populations distributed across the Arabian Peninsula, Asia and the Horn of Africa.
97. In conclusion, Dr Ali informed participants that the FAO Regional Office for the Near East would submit a proposal to establish a regional forum for animal health, during the 25th FAO Regional Conference, which will be held in the Lebanon in March 2000 and attended by most of the ministers for agriculture of the 29 states of the region.

Discussion

98. In response to an enquiry from a member of the Omani Delegation on whether the Old World screwworm control programme did not overlap with the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development Programme, the FAO Representative explained that these two projects were complementary from a technical point of view.
99. The FAO Representative welcomed the idea of cooperation with the OIE Regional Representation in Lebanon.
100. The Delegate of Iraq expressed his concern on the risk that OWS represented for all the countries in the region and his desire that the AOAD, FAO and OIE cooperate to provide concrete assistance to control this parasite.

World Health Organization/MZCC

101. Dr Aristarhos Seimenis, Director of the WHO/Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Centre in Athens, Greece, described the Mediterranean Zoonoses

Control Programme of the World Health Organization and its Plan of Work for 1999-2001.

102. The WHO Representative underlined the fact that zoonoses and related food-borne diseases are known to cause public health and socio-economic problems of considerable magnitude in most of the Mediterranean and Middle Eastern areas. The close contact of a large proportion of the human population with animals; the consumption of animal products, such as unpasteurised milk and dairy products; changes in nutritional habits; a continuous intensification of animal production and international trade in animals and animal products; the rising number of stray dogs and wild carnivores; illegal slaughtering of animals; and inappropriate waste disposal practices, are the main factors responsible for the emergence and re-emergence of zoonotic infections world-wide and in particular within these areas.
103. Dr Seimenis recalled that decades ago, the countries of the Mediterranean and Middle East regions realised that zoonotic diseases, such as brucellosis, echinococcosis, leishmaniasis, rabies and zoonotic salmonellosis, could not be efficiently controlled or eliminated if prevention, surveillance and control activities were carried out in isolation by individual countries. He emphasised that effective zoonoses surveillance and control require strong international co-operation.
104. Dr Seimenis indicated that this situation was first addressed by the World Health Organization's Member States at the 31st World Health Assembly held in 1978, which endorsed a Resolution on the 'Prevention and Control of Zoonoses and Food-borne Diseases due to Animal Products'. Following the adoption of this Resolution, the WHO created the Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Programme (MZCP). Its main objectives are to foster, both at national and inter-regional levels, programmes for the prevention, surveillance and control of zoonoses and related food-borne diseases, to strengthen co-operation between national animal health and public health services, and to foster collaboration between MZCP Member States and relevant WHO Collaborating Centres and MZCP National Participating Institutions. Dr Seimenis added that for the co-ordination and management of MZCP activities, the Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Centre (MZCC) was established in 1979 in Athens.
105. With regard to cooperation with other institutions, the WHO Representative stated that the MZCC closely collaborates with the Department of Communicable Diseases Surveillance and Response at WHO headquarters, Geneva, as well as with the WHO Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean, based in Alexandria, Egypt, specialised WHO Collaborating Centres and the MZCP network of National Participating Institutions. Moreover, it maintains close relations with the

Office International des Epizooties and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations. He pointed out that a Joint Co-ordinating Committee meets every two years to evaluate the activities implemented during the previous two years and define the Programme's plan of work for the next biennium.

106. According to Dr Seimenis, it is anticipated that the Programme will shift its main focus and activities from inter-country co-ordination and collaboration to national human resources development in the participating countries. It will concentrate its future work on certain high priority activities, which would include training of national health and veterinary officers and laboratory staff in areas related to surveillance, prevention and control of selected zoonoses: (a) inter-country training support involving training workshops for selected national experts, and (b) national training support aimed at national staff (mainly physicians and veterinarians) at national and district levels.
107. In conclusion, Dr Seimenis underlined that one of the main objectives of the new plan of work is to establish the MZCP as a leading training programme on zoonoses and veterinary public health activities in the region.

Discussion

108. Several Delegates enquired whether the MZCC coordinated its activities on both a national and international level. Dr Seimenis stressed that the MZCC works in close collaboration with both the Health and Agricultural Ministries in each country, as well as with the regional representatives of the WHO. The MZCC contacts two official focal points (one in each of the aforementioned Ministries) for any information and/or activity. The activities of the MZCC differ from, but also complement, those of the WHO for the control of zoonoses. The MZCP is a different and semi-autonomous programme with relation to the WHO programme. He added that it was thus possible to give priority to public health through direct technical contact with its Members with a view to providing assistance.
109. The Delegate of Iraq requested clarification on why all the countries in the region could not benefit from the MZCP and on the concrete results of this programme. In reply, the Representative explained that the participation of a given country is on a voluntary basis, and that it is backed by financial participation. He added that all the countries in the region are not obliged to participate in the MZCP, but are invited to do so. In response to the second query, Dr Seimenis remarked that the concrete results of the programme could not be obtained without the close collaboration of services in charge of human health and those responsible

for animal health. Intersectorial cooperation was indispensable in order to guarantee the success of a zoonosis control programme.

110. The Delegates of Cyprus and Kuwait assured the MZCC Representative of their full support and expressed the wish for close cooperation between the Centre and the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East, especially regarding the organisation of training courses.

Arab Organization for Agricultural Development

111. Dr Salem El-Ayan, Regional Coordinator of Old World Screwworm Control in the Middle East, based in Damascus, Syria, and Representative of the Arab Organization for Agricultural Development, with headquarters in Khartoum, Sudan, gave a short description of the Regional Emergency Project for the Control of Old World Screwworm (*Chrysomya bezziana*) in some countries of the Middle East (Bahrain, Iran, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Lebanon, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, Syria and the United Arab Emirates). Phase I (preparatory phase) began mid-1998 for a period of two years. Its main objectives are to limit the spread of the disease by using all available preventive and control measures; to reduce the fly population densities to minimise the economic losses; to carry out related research; and to collect biological, ecological and behavioral data. Phase I was financed by the Islamic Development Bank, the Arab Fund for Social and Economic Development, the Organization of Petroleum Exporting Countries and the United Nations Development Programme. Dr El-Ayan mentioned that the disease was well established in some 12 provinces of Iraq, and that according to the most recent reports from national coordinators, the presence of the fly had been reported in Bahrain, Iran, Kuwait, Oman and the United Arab Emirates. The other countries involved, namely Jordan, the Lebanon, Qatar, Saudi Arabia and Syria, were free from the disease.
112. The AOAD Representative added that Phase II of the project had been submitted to obtain the approval of the regional governments and financial support from international organisations and donor institutions. This phase would include the 'sterile insect technique' (SIT), which was being applied to eradicate New World screwworm (NWS), and which had proved to be successful in many countries of the Caribbean, as well as in Libya, Mexico and the United States of America.
113. Dr El-Ayan then commented on the second AOAD project, namely, the Regional Project for the Control of Brucellosis in Iraq, Jordan, Syria, Iraq, Lebanon and the Palestinian National Authority. The economic losses caused by this disease are very high in the entire region. The project's objectives are the control of the disease and drafting of a future animal production programme; encouragement of regional cooperation;

promotion of inter-trade in live animals and animal products within the countries of the project; training of technical staff in the field of diagnosis and control of brucellosis; exchanges between the member countries relating to experience and results of research; creation of a new control system for across the border blights; and lastly, strengthening of quarantine measures in member countries through the use of modern technologies.

Discussion

114. It was proposed that the AOAD further harmonisation of surveillance and control methods, especially with regard to OWS and brucellosis, which were at present the most serious health risks for the region. Dr El-Ayan agreed, but reminded participants that OWS control using chemicals did not give the expected results and that SIT would be the only way to eradicate the pest from the region.
115. The Delegate of Iraq confirmed that OWS eradication would be very difficult to achieve, in spite of the assistance given by the FAO and AOAD. There were as yet no positive results. The cost of OWS control in the region would be very high and comparable to the cost of NWS control in Libya. Regional cooperation, especially on a financial level, was therefore indispensable. Furthermore, the Delegate observed that other diseases, such as brucellosis and Crimean Congo fever, were a threat for the region.

OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East

116. Dr Ghazi Yehya, Coordinator of the OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East, based in Beirut, Lebanon, informed participants that although the office was officially inaugurated in November 1998 and began its duties in March 1999, it would only be able to function once the proposed activities for the Regional Representation and a work plan for the next three years had been discussed and approved by the Conference.
117. The Coordinator recalled that the Regional Representation was to serve as a springboard for initiating regional collaborative programmes or projects with a view to improving animal disease information and harmonising control of the major animal diseases in the region. Dr Yehya then summarised the objectives of the Representation: to improve animal health information systems; to facilitate safeguarding inter-regional trade; to improve quality control of veterinary medicinal products in the region; and to address animal or public health emergencies.

118. In conclusion, Dr Yehya briefly outlined the Work Plan Proposal for the Year 2000, which included workshops, publication of a *Regional Disease Report* on detailed data and disease information not already published in the *OIE Bulletin* and fully validated by the respective Chief Veterinary Officers, and translation into Arabic of the *OIE International Animal Health Code*.

Discussion

119. The Chairperson thanked Dr Yehya for his presentation. He then put forward for discussion and approval by the Conference the draft report on the activities of the Regional Representation for the next three years.
120. Dr Yehya also informed the Conference that the Arabic translation of three chapters of the *OIE International Animal Health Code* concerning the following diseases: African horse sickness, bovine spongiform encephalopathy and rinderpest, was already available, and copies of these documents were distributed to the participants.
121. In response to a request from Dr Economides for details on the workshops to be organised by the OIE Regional Representation and on their financing, Dr Yehya provided details on the workshops and explained that he could not yet provide precise information on the financing, given the limited budget of the Regional Representation. He added that the President of the Regional Commission had written to seven donor agencies requesting financial support for the activities of the Representation.
122. The Delegate of Cyprus suggested that the Regional Representation and the MZCC study the possibility of holding a joint workshop on 'Food Safety and Regional Trade'.
123. The Delegate of Iran asked the Delegates of Member Countries to cooperate with Dr Yehya in strengthening the reporting system in the region and in assisting the Regional Representation by all means possible.
124. The Session Chairperson closed the discussion following the approval of the 1999-2000 Programme proposed by the OIE Regional Representation.
125. In conclusion, Dr Yehya thanked all Member Countries for their confidence and support, and assured them that he would make every effort to guarantee the success of the Regional Representation.

Presentation and discussion of

draft Recommendations for Items I and II

126. Draft Recommendations Nos 1 and 2 were distributed to participants, read aloud and put forward for discussion. Several amendments were proposed.

**Date, venue and agenda items for the 6th Conference
of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East**

127. The President of the Conference asked Delegates present if one of their countries wished to host the 6th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East.
128. The Delegate of the Lebanon confirmed his Government's willingness to host the Conference in Beirut in 2001.
129. The Delegate of Iran observed that, as an alternative, his Government would also be willing to host the Regional Conference in 2001, or in 2003.
130. The participants welcomed these proposals. It was suggested that the technical items and dates for the Conference would be decided at the next General Session in May 2000.

Tuesday, 5 October 1999

Field trip

131. The Omani Delegation organised a one-day field trip to the Wadi Qurriyat Animal Research Station and Tanuf Reserve Dam in the Al-Dakhilia Region, passing through Nizwa, the capital of the interior. Great interest was shown by the participants, who also enjoyed visiting some historical sites in the area.

Wednesday, 6 October 1999

**Adoption of the Draft Final Report
and Recommendations for Items I and II**

132. The Conference approved Recommendations Nos 1 and 2 (Appendices IV and V). The Draft Final Report was adopted pending certain amendments.

Closing Ceremony

133. On behalf of all participants, Dr Al-Khalaf thanked the Government of Oman and especially His Excellency, the Minister of Agriculture and Fisheries, as well as Dr Al-Suleimany and his colleagues, for their warm hospitality.
134. Dr Yehya also thanked Dr Al-Suleimany and expressed his hope seeing everyone in Lebanon in 2001.
135. Dr Economides read a motion of thanks to the Government of Oman (Appendix VI) and the Delegate of Qatar read a special motion of thanks in Arabic to His Majesty Sultan Qaboos. The translation into English of the motion of thanks was then read by the FAO Representative.
136. Dr Blancou noted the conclusions to be drawn from the proceedings of the Conference and praised its success and the interest of the technical items chosen by the Commission. He expressed his sincere gratitude to the Omani Authorities for the welcome they had accorded to all participants and thanked Dr Al-Suleimany for having organised and presided over the meeting with such efficiency. The Director General congratulated the Rapporteurs for their presentations and all those who had contributed to, and enriched, the discussions. A final expression of thanks went to the Delegate of Lebanon for offering to host the next Regional Commission meeting.
137. Dr Al-Suleimany extended his thanks to all participants, Delegates, rapporteurs and observers for their contribution to the success of the Conference. He also thanked his collaborators and the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, and stressed the importance of the work accomplished. In conclusion, Dr Al-Suleimany expressed his appreciation to the many sponsors of the Conference. The Delegate of the Sultanate of Oman to the OIE declared the 5th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East officially closed at 11.00 a.m.

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**5th Conference
of the
OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East**

Muscat (Oman), 3-6 October 1999

Agenda

- I. The Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and its impact on trade in animals and animal products in the Middle East
- II. Systems of animal identification (ear tagging, branding, etc.) and their importance for disease surveillance
- III. Animal health status of Member Countries during the first semester of 1999
- IV. Other matters
 - OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East
 - Date, venue and agenda items for the 6th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East

Appendix III

**5th Conference
of the
OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East**

Muscat (Oman), 3-6 October 1999

Timetable

Sunday 3 October 1999

- 9.00 am - Opening Ceremony at the Grand Hyat Hotel
- 10.30 am - Registration and distribution of documents at the Haffa House Hotel
- 11.00 am - Election of the Conference Committee (Chairperson, Vice-Chairperson and Rapporteur General)
 - Adoption of Provisional Agenda and Timetable
 - Election of Session Chairpersons and Rapporteurs for Technical Items and Animal Health Status
- 11.30 am - Animal Health Status of Member Countries
- 12.30 pm - Lunch
- 2.00 pm - **Technical Item I:** The Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures and its impact on trade in animals and animal products in the Middle East (João Magalhães)
- 3.30 pm - Break
- 4.00 pm - **Technical Item I** (continued)
- 5.30 pm - (Preparation of recommendations for Item 1 by designated small group)
- 8.00 pm - Reception given by the Ministry of Agriculture

Appendix III (cont.)**Monday 4 October 1999**

- 9.00 am - **Technical Item II:** Systems of animal identification (ear tagging, branding, etc.) and their importance for disease surveillance (Georgios Neophytou)
- 10.30 am - Break (Continuation of preparation of recommendations for Item I if necessary)
- 11.00 am - **Technical Item II** (continued)
- 12.30 pm - Lunch (Preparation of recommendations for Item II by designated small group)
- 2.00 pm - Presentations by international and regional organisations
- 3.00 pm - OIE Regional Representation for the Middle East
- 3.30 pm - Break
- 4.00 pm - Discussion of recommendations for Items I and II
- 4.30 pm - Date and venue for the 6th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
- 8.00 pm - Reception given by the OIE

Tuesday 5 October 1999

Visit to the Wadi Qurriyat Animal Research Station and the Tanuf Dam in the Al-Dakhilia Region.

Wednesday 6 October 1999

- 9.00 am - Adoption of Final Report and Recommendations
- 10.30 am - Break

11.00 am - Closing

Appendix III
Ceremony

Appendix IV (cont.)

**5th Conference
of the
OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
Muscat (Oman) 3-6 October 1999**

Recommendation No. 1

**The Agreement on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures
and its impact on trade in animals and animal products in the Middle
East**

CONSIDERING

That most of the OIE Member Countries are also Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO),

The relationship between the OIE and the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement),

That transparency is a key provision of the SPS Agreement and the OIE system,

That Middle East countries identify technical assistance as a necessity for a proper implementation of the SPS Agreement and participation in OIE activities,

THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST
RECOMMENDS THAT

- .1 OIE Member Countries, which have not yet requested accession to the WTO, be encouraged to do so.
- .2 OIE Member Countries and WTO Members, and countries in the process of negotiating accession to the WTO, which have not yet identified a National Notification Authority and/or an Enquiry Point, be encouraged to do so.
- .3 WTO Members and OIE Member Countries, including countries in the process of negotiating accession to the WTO, be encouraged to notify animal health draft regulations.

Appendix IV

- .4 Efforts be made to improve coordination at the national level between different services (official and private) dealing with trade-related health measures, especially those concerning zoonoses, food safety and plant protection.
- .5 Means to further the intensification of bilateral technical cooperation and assistance as well as the intensification of technical cooperation and assistance provided by the WTO Secretariat and specialized international organizations to Middle East countries be identified, in particular with regard to national capacity building, including animal health legislation , human resources development and the transfer of technology and information.
- .6 In case of disagreement, OIE Member Countries be urged to attempt to solve the problem bilaterally, at the regional level, and use the procedures provided by Article 1.4.3.6 of the OIE *International Animal Health Code* .

(Adopted by the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
on 6 October 1999)

Appendix V (cont.)

**5th Conference
of the
OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
Muscat (Oman) 3-6 October 1999**

Recommendation No. 2

**Systems of animal identification and their importance
for disease surveillance**

CONSIDERING

The necessity for the traceability of animal and animal products to ensure the safety of regional trade,

The importance of a reliable epidemiological surveillance systems to substantiate disease freedom, prevalence and localisation of diseases,

The important role of a reliable and efficient Identification and Registration (I&R) System in disease surveillance and control, in animal production, in meat inspection and in residue control programmes,

The dissimilarity of cultural, social and economic conditions of animal husbandry in European countries where most of the I&R Systems are developed and applied, from those in the Middle East region,

THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE MIDDLE EAST
RECOMMENDS THAT

1. An Ad hoc Group be convened by the OIE and led by the Regional Representation for the Middle East, in cooperation with other international organisations, to study the possibility of developing a model of I&R System appropriate for these countries, which can respond to their animal husbandry systems, be compatible with their monitoring and surveillance models, and with their animal health information systems, and which will correspond to their cultural, social and economic realities.

Appendix V

2. The implementation of the registration and identification of animals come within the scope of animal disease control and animal production programmes carried out in the region.

(Adopted by the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East
on 6 October 1999)

MOTION OF THANKS

The President and the Members of the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, the Director General of the OIE, the members of Delegations of Member Countries, the representatives of international organisations and the observers present wish to express their gratitude to the Government of the Sultanate of Oman, the Host Country of the 5th Conference of the Regional Commission, for the excellent welcome accorded them and for all facilities made available to them during their stay in Muscat from 3 to 6 October 1999.