

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

Paris, 22 May 2017

The OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East met on 22 May 2017 at the Maison de la Chimie, Paris at 2:00 p.m. The meeting was attended by 47 participants, including Delegates and observers from 13 Members of the Commission, 1 observer territory, and representatives from 2 international or regional organisations:

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

Observer territory: Palestinian Autonomous Territories.

International/regional organisations: FAO¹ and the Donkey Sanctuary.

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

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda, described in the Appendix, was unanimously adopted.

2. OIE Regional Roadmap implementation - challenges faced by the region

Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East, provided participants with details on the OIE Regional Roadmap, its development and the challenges faced by the region.

He described the main objectives of the activities implemented by the OIE Regional Representation under the OIE Sixth Strategic Plan during the previous 12 months, which had focused mainly on building the capacity of Veterinary Services and contributing to animal disease prevention and control in the Middle East.

Dr Yehia provided details of the assistance given to countries wishing to take part in laboratory and veterinary education Twinning programmes. Dr Yehia also described the challenges observed in conducting these activities in a particularly unstable geopolitical context.

¹ FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

He then presented the conclusions of the workshop on OIE standards for safe trade, held in Dubai in March 2017, and informed participants on the joint project with Brussels OIE office on formulating modules on animal welfare for transport of animals by land and sea.

Dr Yehia also commented on the appointment of new Delegates in Member Countries of the region.

He then gave brief details on the regional strategies, in particular for implementation of the Foot-and-Mouth Disease Progressive Control Pathway (FMD-PCP) and the Peste des Petits Ruminants Monitoring and Assessment Tool (PMAT) in the region, as well as the two regional advisory group meetings planned to take place in 2017.

He also referred to the Middle East Regional Animal Welfare Strategy's Action Plan and commented on the advocating document drawn up to raise funds for its implementation. He gave details on the work that had been done in the region and the planned activities on long-distance transport by land and sea.

He then provided a brief summary of activities planned over the coming months, including a seminar for OIE Focal Points for veterinary products; the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East; and an FMD/PPR Roadmaps meeting.

He concluded by reminding Delegates that the OIE Regional Representation office for the Middle East was open to welcome any experts, staff or representatives from regional OIE Members for assistance or training.

3. Organisation of the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East to be held from 2 to 6 October 2017

Dr Visal Kayacik, representative of Turkey, confirmed that her country was willing and honoured to hold this important regional event and invited all Delegates to attend the conference.

She gave a brief account of the various arrangements that Turkey had made to start organising the conference. Dr Kayacik showed a video on visiting Istanbul and provided general information about visa issuance, hotel accommodation and transport, giving assurances that full details would be sent to participants in a timely manner.

Dr Yehia offered to provide any support to Delegates for their attendance and planning for the conference.

4. Selection of Technical Item II (without questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East

The Regional Commission proposed the following technical item (without questionnaire) for inclusion in the agenda of the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East:

“Addressing Challenges in the Middle East at the Human Animal Interface
under the One Health concept”

Dr Yehia thanked all the Delegates for their other suggestions which included “overview of the aquatic fauna in the Mediterranean and its impact on fish diseases”, “integrated tick control” and “*Brucella melitensis* control in camels and cattle”. He noted that there could also be an opportunity for discussion on such issues at the upcoming Regional Commission Conference in Turkey.

5. Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the 87th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates to be held in May 2019

The Regional Commission proposed the following technical item (with a questionnaire to Members) for inclusion in the agenda of the 87th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates to be held in May 2019:

“Socio-economic impact of new emerging and re-emerging parasitic infestations of livestock”

6. Proposal of a Member of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East to join the Bureau of the Regional Commission for the Middle East as President

Dr Hadi Mohsin Al-Lawati, Member of the OIE Council and Delegate of Oman, reminded participants that the Delegate of Qatar had stepped down, leaving vacant his position as President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East, which required an election to be held.

Following a discussion involving several Delegates, Dr Majid Al-Qassimi, Delegate of United Arab Emirates, was unanimously proposed as President of the OIE Regional Commission for a one-year period, until the election for the next three-year mandate of the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission, which will be held in May 2018.

To replace Dr Majid Al-Qassimi’s current role as Vice-President, Dr Fajer Al-Saloom Delegate of Bahrain, was unanimously proposed as a new Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission for a one-year period, until the election for the next three-year mandate of the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission, which will be held in May 2018.

This proposal will be presented to the World Assembly for endorsement.

7. Preliminary outcomes of the PVS Pathway Think Tank Forum

Dr John Stratton, Deputy Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department, described the OIE PVS Pathway Think Tank Forum, which had been held at OIE Headquarters in Paris from 4 to 6 April 2017. He confirmed that it had clearly met its stated purpose of providing an “opportunity to work together to review and plan for the strategic evolution of the OIE PVS Pathway in improving animal health and welfare globally”, with its three days of highly successful, interactive, stimulating and productive discussion.

He explained that the 74 participants had been divided into four roughly equal-sized stakeholder groups representing: (i) Member Countries; (ii) OIE staff; (iii) PVS Pathway experts and (iv) OIE partners (including donors). Each group had focused on four or five concepts or options of greatest relevance to the group for evolving the PVS Pathway. Dr Stratton gave a brief summary of the concepts that had been considered and commended the excellent feedback received from all participants on the detailed preparations, the interactive and innovative format and delivery, and the positive, open and convivial atmosphere throughout.

Dr Stratton said that the report was being finalised and that outcomes would be shared with all Member Countries and interested parties, with the evolution of the OIE PVS Pathway to be rolled out intensively over the next 12 months. He added that, while the specifics would be confirmed over the coming weeks, the overall aim would be to provide OIE Member Countries, staff, experts and partners with a more tailored, flexible approach to their PVS Pathway engagement that was more responsive to their particular needs.

In conclusion, he said that such an evolution was completely appropriate, given the long standing of the PVS Pathway and its stable and robust basic tools and methods. As the great majority of countries already possess a solid baseline of PVS Pathway evaluation and planning information, more highly tailored approaches will further assist them in moving forward with the OIE to improve animal health globally.

8. Update on the activities related to the Global Strategy for the Control and Eradication of Peste des Petits Ruminants

Dr Jean-Jacques Soula, OIE Coordinator of the joint FAO-OIE PPR Secretariat began his presentation by underlining that peste des petits ruminants (PPR) was a devastating viral disease that had spread steadily, since it was first identified in 1942, to more than 70 countries in Africa, the Middle East and Asia. It has a heavy impact on the lives of some 300 million of the world's poorest families whose livelihoods depend on sheep and goats. The control and eventual eradication of the disease by 2030 will make a major contribution to achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), in particular ending poverty (SDG1) and ending hunger and malnutrition (SDG2).

Dr Soula added that, in April 2015, participants in an international conference held by FAO and the OIE in Abidjan, approved the PPR Global Control and Eradication Strategy (PPR-GCES), which was endorsed by FAO and OIE member countries, in 2015 and 2016, through the supreme governing bodies of the two organisations. Accordingly, the joint FAO-OIE PPR Secretariat was established in 2016 and the PPR Regional Roadmap consultation process was conducted in 76 infected or at-risk countries, divided into nine regions.

He went on to explain that, in 2016, following an inclusive and peer-reviewed drafting process, FAO and the OIE had launched the PPR Global Eradication Programme (PPR-GEP) for the period 2017-2021. It includes components on stakeholder involvement, strengthening Veterinary Services, support for diagnostic and surveillance systems, vaccination campaigns and control of other small ruminant diseases. A pledging conference will be held in the coming months in order to mobilise additional resources and plug the financial gaps with on-going projects and programmes.

Dr Soula concluded by saying that PPR-GEP was a flagship programme for FAO and OIE, as PPR eradication was linked directly to major global challenges like food and nutrition security, poverty alleviation, resilience, women's empowerment and migration control.

Dr Soula also showed a communications video on PPR eradication.

Dr Yehia mentioned that there will be back-to-back FMD and PPR Roadmap meetings in Amman, Jordan from 15-18 October 2017, to update the regional roadmap, review national evaluation and planning using PMAT and update the Regional Advisory Group (RAG) if required.

Dr Ahmad Al-Majali, observer from the University of Science and Technology (Jordan), commented that all of the Middle East countries were infected with PPR and that the countries needed to work harder on PPR control. He noted that a problem is there is no DIVA testing (Differentiating Infected from Vaccinated Animals) yet so finishing development and use of this technology should be a focus. The Jordan Bio-Industries Centre (JOVAC) is producing a vaccine that can facilitate DIVA testing and it should be used to help countries move along the PMAT stages. The French Agricultural Research and International Corporation Organization (CIRAD), France and JOVAC, Jordan are engaging in an OIE Twinning programme on PPR and contagious caprine pleuropneumonia (CCPP) diagnostics.

Dr Yehia commented that JOVAC has been chosen as a PPR vaccine bank site for Africa and Middle East. He encouraged all Members to come to Amman in October thoroughly prepared with their national PPR planning.

9. Status of notifications by Members in the Middle East

Dr Neo Mapitse, Deputy Head of the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department, gave a brief update on the status of notifications by Members in the region as of 18 May 2017.

He began by providing some indicators on compliance with reporting in 2016. He mentioned that the region could make improvements in the submission of aquatic and annual reports and he encouraged Members with outstanding reports to submit them in a timely manner through the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) to improve the regional outlook.

Dr Mapitse also gave an overview of some of the elements of tracking events not notified to the OIE and encouraged Members to provide feedback to clarify the situation when requests were made.

To conclude, Dr Mapitse asked for support from the region to recommend one animal disease notification focal point from the region to join the Technical Advisory Committee, which is one of the governance bodies of the WAHIS+ renovation project.

Dr Yehia emphasised that the region needed to improve its reporting of diseases from its aquatic animal and wildlife populations, and that Members need to reach out across to the relevant Ministries to ensure this can happen.

10. Update on the camel Middle East network (CaMeNet)

Dr Salama Al Muhairi, Director of the Veterinary Laboratories Department at Abu Dhabi Food Control Authority (ADFCA), gave a brief update on the status of the regional laboratory networking initiative, CaMeNeT, which is a scientific network on camel health and practices, consisting of nine camel-breeding countries in the Middle East: Bahrain, Iraq, Jordan, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar, Saudi Arabia, United Arab Emirates and Yemen.

Dr Al Muhairi explained that the main objective of CaMeNeT was to assist Member Countries developing their camel sector, in particular by controlling camel diseases. She noted that the establishment of CaMeNeT was a strategic step for countries in the region to address the challenges related to the global economic impact of camels.

Dr Al Muhairi also explained that, through CaMeNeT, Member Countries would be able to:

1. Improve scientific and technological capabilities for camel disease epidemiology and diagnosis.
2. Ensure coordination between international organisations (OIE/FAO/World Health Organization) and national authorities (including Veterinary Services) in Member Countries to combat and control camel diseases, including emerging diseases.
3. Facilitate cooperation between national, regional and international institutions, Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres to build capacity and share experiences.
4. Contribute to the development, standardisation and accreditation of diagnostic methods for major camel diseases in accordance with the global standards and procedures of the OIE.
5. Encourage studies on epidemiological diseases of camels and the common risks of animals, humans and the environment.

11. Presentations by International and Regional Organisations

Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)

Dr Berhe Tekola, Director of the Animal Production and Health Division at FAO, apologised for the designated FAO speaker, Dr Markos Tibbo Dambi, being unavailable. He said he would give a quick overview of FAO priorities in the region. He informed participants that FAO assisted member countries by building their capacity for disease surveillance, as well as through the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases and zoonoses, building the resilience of communities by protecting their livestock assets with a view to improving productivity. He mentioned that partnerships, including with OIE, were mandatory in how FAO was working.

He added that the disruption of Veterinary Services and the increase in unregulated animal movements in conflict-affected countries were two of the factors that had heightened disease threats in the region. In that regard, FAO has provided training in good emergency management practice(s) and in animal disease emergency preparedness and response, as well as serving as a neutral forum interface with a variety of stakeholders.

FAO has also provided direct support for animal disease surveillance, diagnosis, control of priority animal diseases (foot and mouth disease, peste des petits ruminants, lumpy skin disease, brucellosis, bluetongue, Middle East respiratory syndrome and highly pathogenic avian influenza [HPAI]) and response to antimicrobial resistance. FAO has contributed to or organised important regional events on such issues as the contribution of livestock to food security, expert consultation on contingency planning for HPAI control, capacity-building for antimicrobial resistance surveillance, One Health, and Joint External Evaluation (JEE) of countries to accelerate compliance with WHO International Health Regulations.

Dr Tekola concluded by saying that FAO provided technical, institutional and policy advice through capacity-building, knowledge management, the mobilisation of expertise on sustainable livestock production and the management of feed and animal genetic resources. FAO also supports smallholders engaged in dairy, poultry and small ruminant farming to increase production efficiencies, income, access to markets and resilience to shocks.

Dr Tekola briefly highlighted other FAO priority work in the region including with technology transfer, AMR, community animal health systems, PPR, FMD, avian influenza, MERSCoV and livestock and climate change. He addressed the previous comment relating to the lack of DIVA testing for PPR in the region as being a political decision in opposition to genetic modification used to create the recombinant vaccine. The DIVA tool was ready and this opposition should be overcome to allow use of this important technology in fighting PPR.

Dr Yehia mentioned that OIE works very closely with FAO in the region and that they looked forward to continuing the excellent working relationship.

The meeting ended at 5:15 p.m.

.../Appendix

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Agenda

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3. Organisation of the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East to be held from 2 to 6 October 2017;
4. Selection of Technical Item II (without questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 14th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East;
5. Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the 87th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates to be held in May 2019;
6. Proposal of a Member of the OIE Regional Commission for the Middle East to join the Bureau of the Regional Commission for the Middle East as President;
7. Preliminary outcomes of the PVS Pathway Think Tank Forum;
8. Update on the activities related to the Global Strategy for the Control and Eradication of Peste des Petits Ruminants;
9. Status of notifications by Members in the Middle East;
10. Update on the camel Middle East network (CaMeNet);
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