



WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH

Protecting animals, preserving our future

24th Conference of the OIE Regional
Commission for Africa, by videoconference,
9 to 11 February 2021

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

Following the kind offer of the Government of South Africa during the 87th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE, held in Paris in May 2019, the 24th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa was initially planned to take place in South Africa in February 2021. However, due to the persistence of the COVID-19 pandemic crisis, the OIE Council, following an extraordinary meeting held in June 2020, decided to adapt it to a virtual format. Thus, the 24th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa was held from 9 to 11 February 2021, starting each day at 9:00 a.m. (GMT), by videoconference (via Zoom).

A total of 175 participants, including OIE Delegates and/or representatives from 52 out of the 54 Members of the region, senior officers from 22 regional or international organisations, as well as 22 representatives of other institutions and donor agencies that cooperate closely with the region, attended the Conference. Please refer to Appendix 1 for more details.

Members of the Regional Commission for Africa attending the Conference: Algeria, Angola, Benin, Botswana, Burkina Faso, Burundi, Cameroon, Cabo Verde, Central African Rep., Chad, Comoros, Congo (Rep. of the ~), Congo (Dem. Rep. of the ~), Côte d'Ivoire, Djibouti, Egypt, Equatorial Guinea, Eritrea, Eswatini, Ethiopia, Gabon, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea, Guinea Bissau, Kenya, Lesotho, Liberia, Libya, Madagascar, Malawi, Mali, Mauritania, Mauritius, Morocco, Mozambique, Namibia, Niger, Nigeria, Rwanda, Sao Tome and Principe, Senegal, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Sudan, Tanzania, Togo, Tunisia, Uganda, Zambia and Zimbabwe.

Also present on behalf of the OIE were: Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General, Dr Jean Philippe Dop, OIE Deputy Director General "Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities", Dr Montserrat Arroyo Kuribreña, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department, Dr Karim Tounkara, OIE Regional Representative for Africa, Dr Moetapele Letshwenyo, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for Southern Africa, Dr Rachid Bouguedour, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for North Africa, Dr Samuel Wakhusama, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for Eastern Africa, Dr Luis Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas, Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Dr Ronello Abila, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for South East Asia, Dr Budimir Plavšić, OIE Regional Representative in Moscow, Dr Roberto Balbo, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, Dr Mereke Taitubayev, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for Central Asia, and Dr Ghazi Yehia, OIE Regional Representative for the Middle East. Additionally, relevant key experts and OIE technical and administrative staff also participated in this important event for the Africa region.

TUESDAY 9 FEBRUARY 2021

SESSION 1: OPENING CEREMONY

Welcome remarks

The following senior figures gave a welcome address:

- Dr Honoré Robert N'Leмба Mabela, Delegate of the Democratic Republic of the Congo and President of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa;
- Dr Mark Schipp, Delegate of Australia to the OIE and President of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE;
- Dr Monique Eloit, Director General of the OIE;
- Mrs Angela Thokozile Didiza, Minister of Agriculture, Land Reform and Rural Development of South Africa, who honoured the Conference with her presence and live speech;
- Mr Fanomezantsoa Lucien Ranarivelo, Minister of Agriculture, Livestock and Fisheries of Madagascar, who kindly sent a pre-recorded message;

- Dr Nick Nwankpa, Director of the African Union - Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre, read some remarks on behalf of Her Excellency, Mrs. Josefa Sacko, African Union Commissioner for Rural Economy and Agriculture.

The OIE Director General, in her opening address, thanked Minister Didiza for her presence and as spiritual patron of the Conference, as the Conference had initially been planned to be hosted in the Republic of South Africa. She also had a word of thanks to outgoing Immediate Past President of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE, Dr Botlhe Michael Modisane, OIE Delegate of South Africa, with whom she had worked closely on the implementation of the OIE Sixth Strategic Plan during his tenure as President of the OIE World Assembly and OIE Council from 2015 to 2018. In her speech she emphasised the challenges and opportunities of operating in a digital environment and announced that the next General Session would also be held online.

Dr Karim Tounkara, OIE Regional Representative for Africa, concluded the Opening Ceremony by a vote of thanks in which he acknowledged all the countries' high-level authorities as well as the OIE authorities attending the Opening Ceremony and addressed some remarks to the participants.

SESSION 2: IMPACTS AND LESSONS OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Challenges for the development and implementation of the OIE Seventh Strategic Plan in the post-pandemic world of COVID-19

Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General, informed participants about the adaptations to the OIE Seventh Strategic Plan to address the current and potential new challenges facing the world, and she explained the vision of the OIE on the planning and implementation of its activities for the coming five years. The Seventh Strategic Plan had been prepared in 2019 but could not be endorsed in 2020 because there was no General Session. She explained that it had therefore been revised to take into consideration new priorities and global changes due to the COVID-19 crisis and would be presented for endorsement by OIE Delegates at the General Session in May 2021. She indicated that the Seventh Strategic Plan differs from previous Plans in that during its formulation there were wider consultations with stakeholders – making it more inclusive and leveraging the strengths of the OIE. It is less technical, and more inclined to appeal to policy makers, such as Ministers, while still clearly reflecting the work of the OIE and enhancing its visibility. She explained that it comprises five pillars designed to meet OIE Members' expectations whilst also embracing the OIE's collaborating partners. The Director General appreciated the increased use of digital platforms, and virtual meetings and underscored the need to speed up the process of digital transformation to modernise the OIE. She emphasised that these platforms would be used to broaden the OIE's scientific expertise base to include, for example, wildlife and One Health, supporting Members with training, and working with partners, such as within the Tripartite Alliance (OIE, WHO and FAO). She mentioned that this partner base was also being broadened, for example by including the United Nations Environmental Programme (UNEP), which will ensure that the Alliance also includes environmental issues within the heading of One Health. In conclusion, the Director General noted that she expected the modernised OIE to be more flexible and agile, and that the activities for 2021/22 would be reassessed and reprioritised accordingly.

The pandemic and Veterinary Services – country lessons

The Delegates of South Africa, Botswana and Ghana summarised the experiences of their countries during the COVID-19 pandemic and shared some lessons learned in terms of provision of Veterinary Services during the lockdown, veterinary laboratory support to COVID-19 testing, as well as the impact of the crisis on animal disease surveillance and reporting.

South Africa: The first COVID-19 case was reported on 5 March 2020, and shortly thereafter the state of emergency was instituted. Under COVID-19 control measures, animal health and welfare services were declared essential services – meaning that they could function amid a pandemic but in accordance with COVID-19 protocols – for instance, physical interaction between veterinarians and their clients was kept to a minimum. The OIE Delegate was responsible for issuing movement permits for animal health staff and

farmers, while the South African Veterinary Association (SAVA) issued similar permits for private veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals. Enforcement was done by the law enforcement agencies of South Africa. Challenges included disruption of training for veterinary students, farmers having limited access to their animals (e.g., rounding them up for inspections). The Onderstepoort Veterinary Research institute (OVR), which is an OIE Reference Laboratory for several diseases, was authorised to test COVID-19 human samples. It was able to test 3 500 samples per week and this helped to clear the backlog in testing.

Ghana: three veterinary laboratories were involved in COVID-19 testing, thereby supporting public health laboratories. They processed a total of 70 000 human samples between March 2020, at the start of the COVID-19 crisis, and January 2021. They received samples from hospitals, clinics and from walk-in patients for COVID-19 contact tracing and external travel. Overall collaboration between public health and animal health was strengthened as a result, in application of the One Health concept. Veterinary services in Ghana were now being seen as strategic partners by their public health counterparts and consequently both were participating in a Global Health Security Project, which had originally been intended only for public health.

Botswana: The first case of COVID-19 was diagnosed on 5 March 2020, and this led to the intensification of COVID-19 protocols, which included movement restrictions and travel requiring a movement permit. Although livestock services, including Veterinary Services, were considered essential services, there were many challenges affecting animal health services delivery. These included, among others, movement restrictions, diversion of government resources to the pandemic, finances, fuel, and vehicles. This left the Veterinary Services under-resourced. Farmers could not apply good husbandry practices, such as rounding up animals for routine vaccinations, disease surveillance, etc. Nonetheless, the Veterinary Services were able to detect and control an outbreak of foot and mouth disease in a controlled zone during the pandemic. Trade was also severely affected as people and animals could not move to marketplaces for fear of overcrowding and spreading COVID-19.

Following the Director General's presentation and the experiences reported by the three countries a breakout room discussion took place and the Regional Commission concluded that the COVID-19 pandemic had shown:

- That One Health collaboration between the public and animal health sectors is very important at all stages of preparing for and dealing with a pandemic, starting with preparedness and early response. This includes joint planning and leveraging each other's resources, such as financial, personnel and technical resources (including laboratory testing, vaccine manufacturing, research, etc.).
- The importance of a multisectoral approach to pandemics, including at private sector level, in preparing and responding to a pandemic at both national and international levels. Different sectors bring the additional knowledge/experience and resources needed during a pandemic.
- The need for continuous capacity building across all sectors, to be ready for current and future pandemics. A well-trained and well-resourced work force is likely to react faster and more capably to a pandemic.
- That the involvement of Veterinary Services during the COVID-19 pandemic has increased their visibility and recognition.

OIE strategy to reduce risk and future disease spill over events (wildlife health management) and update on the EBO-SURSY Project

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, the lessons learned from the EBO-SURSY Project, the emerging directions and priorities for the OIE, and the key issues and challenges for Veterinary Services in this field, which included, among others: integrating wildlife health management into the national legislative framework, improving Veterinary Services' perception of wildlife, improving collaboration with relevant sectors and engaging rural communities, and allocating resources to carry out sustainable epidemiological surveillance activities.

In particular, Dr Muset presented the Wildlife Health Management Framework (WHMF), which had been developed in a collaborative manner during the previous months, including inputs from Members collected through a survey. She explained that the aim of the WHMF was to protect wildlife health worldwide to achieve One Health. Two main priorities had been identified and would contribute to public health and conservation objectives, respectively: (1) To improve OIE Members' ability to manage the risk of pathogen emergence in wildlife and transmission at the human-animal-ecosystem interface, whilst considering the protection of wildlife; and (2) To increase the ability of OIE Members to improve surveillance systems, early detection, notification, and management of wildlife diseases. She stated that to achieve these objectives a coordinated set of actions would aim to (1) foster multisectoral collaboration to strengthen wildlife disease surveillance and health management; (2) create an enabling environment to promote the role of Veterinary Services in wildlife health management; and (3) raise awareness of risk pathways and best practices in wildlife health and One Health management. She stated that six work packages had been identified to support the achievement of the objectives. These work packages were integrated in the core activities of the OIE, namely, disease notification, guidelines and standards, communication, scientific knowledge, capacity building, intersectoral collaboration and One Health.

Finally, she highlighted the following steps being taken in connection with the implementation of the WHMF:

- The inclusion of wildlife health as part of the Technical Item for the General Session in 2021 (Lessons learned from the pandemic: how the OIE can support Veterinary Services to achieve One Health Resilience);
- A concrete recommendation from the Wildlife Working Group, which has proposed the addition of a chapter in the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* on the surveillance of wildlife diseases;
- The development and implementation of a strategy to improve notification of wildlife diseases;
- Initiation of the development of guidelines for the management of wildlife health in the context of trade in wildlife and throughout the supply chain;
- Identification of potential sources of funding to implement the identified activities.

Following Dr Muset's presentation and some chat and poll interactive activities organised to better guide the discussion, the Regional Commission concluded that:

- Wildlife share diseases with livestock and humans and are reservoirs for many pathogens; thus, a One Health approach is essential for the prevention and control of diseases at the human-livestock-wildlife interface. It is also important to collaborate with the justice/police sector to combat illegal trade in wildlife.
- There is need to integrate wildlife health management within the national legislative framework and establish a wildlife unit within a Veterinary Services' department.
- There is need to improve Veterinary Services' perception of wildlife; this will require strengthening capacity and advocacy.
- Resources should be allocated to carry out activities such as epidemiological surveillance.

- Wildlife is an asset for the economy of the Africa Region, with many communities relying on it for food, products, trade, and livelihoods in addition to cultural and social benefits.

Day reflection

The first day of the meeting recorded a high level of participation of OIE Delegates with a good level of interactivity between the audience and the speakers. The outcome of the working groups regarding the lessons learned by Veterinary Services from COVID-19 and its impact on their daily activities was very useful since it helped to collect information on the challenges faced in the field, which will be used to build future actions for the Veterinary Services mainly in the framework of One Health and by fostering international and multisectoral cooperation.

The OIE Director General also commended the Conference for its active participation via chat discussion and group work. She pointed out that livestock production sectors continue to grow rapidly to meet the demand of the ever-increasing population and that the Veterinary Services therefore play a critical role in ensuring animal health and welfare through prevention and control of diseases, thereby facilitating safe trade. She also commended Members for having declared animal health and welfare services to be essential services during the COVID-19 pandemic. She emphasised that wildlife health was an important topic and indicated that the OIE and other partners would work towards supporting Veterinary Services to achieve One Health resilience.

WEDNESDAY 10 FEBRUARY 2021

SESSION 3: TECHNICAL TOPICS (INCLUDING GLOBAL CONTROL/ERADICATION PROGRAMMES)

Animal disease situation in the Africa Region and progress on implementing the new OIE-WAHIS system

Dr Paula Cáceres, Head of the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department, started her presentation by providing participants with an update on the animal health situation in the region, mainly covering foot and mouth disease (FMD), African swine fever (ASF), peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and a global update on SARS-CoV-2 in animals.

Regarding FMD, Dr Cáceres indicated that 34 countries in the Region had reported FMD occurrence, with 13 Members reporting it through immediate notifications and 31 Members reporting it in their six-monthly reports. She observed that there had been successes in the Africa region, with Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar and Reunion officially recognised as FMD free, while Botswana and Namibia had officially recognised FMD free zones. On the other hand, Comoros had reported the first occurrence of FMD, and Uganda had reported the first occurrence of a new strain (serotype A) during the period 2019/2020.

Dr Cáceres stated that the ASF situation in the Region was stable, with 23 Members having reporting ASF outbreaks during the period 2019/2020. Sierra Leone had reported the first occurrence of ASF in a zone in February 2020, while Nigeria had reported an unexpected change in the distribution or increase in morbidity or mortality. She also mentioned that the OIE produced a periodic ASF situation report, which was made available on the OIE website to raise awareness of the global situation regarding ASF.

Dr Cáceres then indicated that the PPR situation in the Africa Region was stable, with 29 Members having reporting outbreaks in the period 2019/2020 (69% of reporting Members reported the presence of the disease in 2019/2020 compared to 63% in 2017/2019). She noted that there had been a recurrence of PPR in Libya (2019/2020) and in Morocco (2020). In the Region, six countries (Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar, Mauritius, and South Africa) and two territories (Reunion, Saint Helena) were officially recognised as PPR free and Namibia was recognised as having a zone free from PPR. Dr Cáceres emphasised that Members should continue to implement the Global Strategy for the Eradication of PPR, aimed at achieving eradication of the disease by 2030.

Dr Cáceres stated that cases of SARS-CoV-2 in animals were still occasional but their numbers were continuing to rise, with 457 outbreaks reported in 24 countries globally. However, South Africa was the only country in the Region that had reported the disease (in a *Puma concolor*). She indicated that, to date, SARS-CoV-2 had been reported in nine species: mink, pet ferrets, cats, dogs, lions, tigers, snow leopard, puma, and gorillas; however, there had been no wide circulation of the virus in animals and the routes of transmission from animals to humans were still not fully known. As this was an emerging disease, she urged OIE Members to report any occurrence of the disease through WAHIS, given the threat to public health and the risk of establishing a reservoir in wildlife. She stated that information on the disease was continuously updated in the COVID-19 Portal on the OIE website.

Dr Peter Melens, Deputy Head of the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department, then gave a presentation on the new OIE-WAHIS platform and explained to participants the information it will be able to provide subject to accurate reporting by countries. He demonstrated some of the new features of the OIE-WAHIS platform, where data will be made available to users through a public interface allowing disease dynamics to be visualised in both space and time (mapping features), thereby providing support for disease risk assessments to inform policy and decision making on trade and risk management. He highlighted the fact that the new OIE-WAHIS would soon be launched.

Following the presentation, participants were invited to provide feedback via chat by answering three key questions. The following conclusions were reached:

- The new OIE-WAHIS platform has an enhanced public user interface with mapping features where data can be visualised by users and extracted/downloaded to assist with risk management.
- The new OIE-WAHIS mapping system will allow timely reporting of disease outbreaks, better visualisation of the outbreaks, including their proximity to administrative boundaries, which will facilitate risk management decisions, including for trade purposes. Nevertheless, WAHIS is not a risk management tool but a source of information, and any actions relating to trade must be done using OIE standards.
- Although the OIE has provided users, including Focal Points, with face-to-face or virtual training on the new OIE-WAHIS interface, continuous technical support from the OIE is required for Members/users/Focal Points.
- The new OIE-WAHIS will allow practical uploading of information by first using Excel offline and then uploading the information to the system.
- It is suggested that the new OIE-WAHIS should be interoperable with other animal diseases reporting systems, such as ARIS (*Animal Resources Information System*, African Union).
- It is important to remember that WAHIS has always been publicly accessible. The difference between the current system and the new OIE-WAHIS is that the quality of the maps and the accessibility of information has been greatly improved. The information on the platform is only as accurate as the information provided by the reporting users, and the information provided will only be made available to the public after a thorough validation process. The OIE also has a comprehensive active search system in place for tracking non-official information using the EIOS (WHO) and IBIS-Intelliriver (Australian Government) platforms. If any questions arise from the information thus obtained about the presence of a disease in a given country, OIE will actively seek clarification from the Delegate of the Member concerned.

Progress on rabies elimination in Africa

This session covered a series of short presentations during which participants were informed about the engagement of the Tripartite Alliance (FAO-OIE-WHO) and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) in the rabies elimination programme in Africa and the emerging directions and priorities regarding rabies elimination.

Dr Tenzin Tenzin, Programme Officer (Rabies) at the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for Southern Africa, informed participants about the OIE's activities in Africa with regard to rabies.

The OIE Sub-Regional Representation for North Africa supported the government of Tunisia in the submission of a joint commitment letter, signed by both the Minister of Health and the Minister of Livestock, to end human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030. The OIE also facilitated the delivery of 1 100 000 doses of rabies vaccine during the period 2019/2020 from the OIE Vaccine Bank to the Veterinary Services of Tunisia and Algeria for implementing a mass dog vaccination campaign. At regional level, the OIE organised and conducted meetings and workshops on stray dog population management, rabies elimination strategies and rabies field projects and also supported World Rabies Day commemoration. A Laboratory Twinning project between ANSES (France) and the Pasteur Institute of Tunisia to improve diagnostic capacities, and a Twinning project between Italy (IZS-AM Teramo) and Tunisia (National Veterinary School of Tunisia) on animal welfare with a component on stray dog population control were also finalised.

In Western and Central Africa, the OIE Regional Representation for Africa facilitated the delivery of 410 000 doses of rabies vaccine from the OIE Vaccine Bank to Nigeria, Mali, Togo, and Liberia to conduct mass dog vaccination campaigns. Development of a national rabies control programme and activities in the context of World Rabies Day were also supported. The office also facilitated a rabies diagnostic Twinning project between the Animal and Plant Health Agency (United Kingdom) and the Central Veterinary Laboratory of Sierra Leone.

In Eastern Africa, the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for Eastern Africa facilitated a delivery of rabies vaccine doses from the OIE Vaccine Bank to Eritrea (50 000 doses), Kenya (400 000 doses) and Tanzania (10 000 doses) during the period 2019/2020. The OIE approved a new Twinning agreement between the OIE Reference Laboratory for Rabies at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research of South Africa (parent laboratory) and the National Animal Health Diagnosis and Investigation Centre in Sabeta, Ethiopia (candidate laboratory) to strengthen the rabies diagnostic capacity and surveillance system in Ethiopia. In Kenya, a county-based rabies pilot project was successfully implemented under the Strengthening Veterinary Services in Developing Countries (SVSDC) Project. This project strengthened the capacity of the Veterinary Services in Kenya with regard to the rabies elimination programme. The OIE is currently implementing a scale-up national project on rabies in Kenya under the Prevention and Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (PC-TAD) Project. The OIE also supported the development of national rabies control strategies and World Rabies Day activities in several countries in Eastern Africa.

The OIE Sub-Regional Representation for Southern Africa facilitated the delivery of 600,000 doses of rabies vaccine from the OIE Vaccine Bank to five countries (Angola, Namibia, Lesotho, Madagascar, and Zimbabwe) for mass dog vaccination programmes. The OIE provided technical support for the development of an SADC rabies elimination strategy and for national rabies control programmes, and supported World Rabies Day activities to enhance the rabies awareness programme. The most important achievement in the region was the successful implementation of a rabies elimination project in Namibia and Angola, supported by the German Ministry of Food and Agriculture, in which mass dog vaccination resulted in a reduction of both dog and human rabies cases in Namibia. The project strengthened cross-border harmonisation between Namibia and Angola.

The OIE also helped to facilitate Members' drafting and submission of applications for OIE endorsement of their national rabies control programmes. To this end, Namibia submitted a final complete application for the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (SCAD) to review. There is an opportunity for Members to submit applications for the OIE endorsement of official control programmes for dog-mediated rabies. This

can provide international recognition of the technical quality of national rabies control programmes, thereby supporting Members seeking to make self-declarations of freedom from dog-mediated rabies.

Dr Tieble Traore, Technical Officer Emergency Preparedness and Response (Human-Animal-Environment Interface) from WHO, provided a general overview of the rabies burden in the world and in Africa. He emphasised that a rabies elimination programme required a multisectoral One Health approach and that rabies elimination could contribute to the achievement of sustainable development goals 1, 3, 10 and 17. He also provided details of WHO's engagement, such as training and workshops, development of guidelines, and awareness education campaigns.

Dr Charles Bebay, Regional Manager of the FAO Emergency Centre for Transboundary Animal Diseases (FAO ECTAD) for Eastern Africa, spoke about the 'Global Strategic Plan – "Zero by 30" and FAOs engagement on behalf of the rabies elimination programme, such as by facilitating countries' access to rabies information, improving surveillance and diagnostic capacity by providing materials and training, and supporting awareness campaigns during World Rabies Day. He also mentioned that FAO was currently supporting eight central African countries (Cameroon, Congo (Dem. Rep. of the ~), Congo (Rep. of the ~) Gabon, Equatorial Guinea, Central African Republic, Chad, and Sao Tome & Principe) through Technical Cooperation Programmes (TCPs) to develop a multi-sectoral action plan and to implement a rabies elimination programme. He also pointed out that 2030 was just around the corner, and therefore countries needed to accelerate their activities under the One Health approach.

Dr Andre Coetzer, GARC Focal Point for Africa, spoke about GARC's engagement in the rabies elimination programme in Africa. He mentioned that GARC's focus was on supporting governments in their own rabies control efforts, primarily through three rabies-specific networks developed by GARC to foster regional collaboration and to disseminate information and training on various tools and resources.

GARC established the first network – the Pan-African Rabies Control Network (PARACON) –, which has been operational across all the sub-Saharan African countries since the inaugural workshop was held in South Africa in 2015. In fact, it was at this workshop that the objective to eliminate dog-transmitted rabies by 2030 was accepted for the first time and later taken up globally. PARACON is a platform that allows participants to learn from international experts and to work with various tools and resources, which can then be used in their own programmatic activities.

During the aforementioned workshop in 2015, participants from 33 countries were introduced to the Stepwise Approach Towards Rabies Elimination (SARE) – a practical planning, monitoring, and evaluation tool to guide, develop and refine rabies control programmes – providing measurable steps towards freedom from dog-transmitted rabies. Since the first workshop, follow-up events have been held in both English-speaking and French-speaking countries, with the workshops alternating between the different regions, and full regional meetings taking place every three years.

In 2016 and 2017, an additional tool, the Rabies Epidemiological Bulletin (REB), was launched. The REB is a free-to-use rabies-specific disease surveillance platform that acts as a centralised data gathering and analysis tool for countries. Use of the REB enables countries to collect their national-level rabies data and make data-driven decisions.

During a regional workshop in 2018, participants from 27 countries were introduced to the newest functionality of the SARE, providing the ability to automatically convert completed SARE assessments into work plans, with suggested contents that can be customised and refined by the users. This enables countries to generate customised work plans in a matter of days instead of weeks or months.

In 2019, participants from seven countries were introduced to the newest functionality of the REB, namely: 1) the ability to track and monitor laboratory cases in the field; 2) the ability to track and monitor vaccinated animals in the field; and 3) the ability to track patients' progress as they receive post exposure prophylaxis at healthcare facilities.

Since 2015, 86% of the PARACON countries have been introduced to the SARE at a PARACON workshop, 41% proceeded to undertake in-country SARE workshops and 60% of those used the SARE to develop their own rabies elimination work plans. These work plans supported their national strategies but are also used to gain regional and international support.

Currently, the REB is routinely being used by 51% of countries to collate, store, and analyse their national-level rabies surveillance data, with many countries using the additional components to further strengthen their surveillance work.

Following some chat discussions, the Regional Commission concluded:

- The presence of many dogs, including stray and free-roaming dogs, in the Region poses a challenge to managing dog populations and vaccinating against rabies. The participants proposed the study of dog population dynamics and options for population management and control.
- Dog rabies vaccine is not readily available (and not affordable by most Members) for implementing mass dog vaccination campaigns; the Tripartite and the partner organisations should provide rabies vaccine and funding support to maximise vaccination coverage.
- GAVI (The Vaccine Alliance) has identified supporting the availability of rabies vaccines for post-exposure prophylaxis in humans as one of their investment strategies and one of Gavi's strategic goals for the next five years. This could substantially reduce the disease burden.
- Rabies is a classic example of a One Health disease and thus requires a multisectoral One Health approach to elimination. Members are therefore exhorted to involve their stakeholders in their rabies control programmes.
- The Tripartite and other partners should support Members with developing their national rabies control programme as an integral component of their strengthened One Health approach in their national plans and platforms.
- Members thanked the OIE and its partners for their support in the rabies control and eradication. Togo referred in particular to the 50,000 doses of rabies vaccines facilitated by the OIE in 2020-2021, in support of a national campaign aimed at reducing the cases of human deaths due to dog bites. This has enabled the country to cover 80% of the dog population in age to be vaccinated. Additionally to the vaccines facilitated by the OIE, the country benefited from 50,000 doses from the REDISSE project, and 50,000 from UEMOA, as part of its support to its member states to reduce the effects of COVID-19 on food security.

Implementation of antimicrobial resistance (AMR) activities in Africa

Dr Jane Lwoyero, Programme Officer (AMR, food safety) at the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for Eastern Africa, provided an overview regarding the implementation of the current AMR action plans in the Africa Region and the preparation of future plans. Her presentation highlighted the tool used to monitor progress with the implementation of AMR National Action Plans (NAPs), namely the Tripartite AMR Country Self-Assessment Survey (TrACSS) and the country scores on some selected questions from the survey.

According to the TrACSS report on the 2019-2020 survey, most countries in Africa had AMR NAPs that were endorsed by their governments but the progress on implementation of the NAPs varied. Funding to support implementation of NAPs was reported to be the main cause of the slow progress realised across the continent. It was also noted that some Delegates were not aware of the TrACSS since this document is usually sent to countries by WHO through the Ministries of Health. Delegates were informed of the importance of collaborating with the Ministries of Health in their countries on the implementation of AMR NAPs and in compiling the data required for the country self-assessment questionnaire to ensure that information on implementation of the AMR NAP by the Veterinary Services is well captured in the TrACSS survey questionnaire. The importance of using the antimicrobial use data collected to inform policy decisions was also mentioned. Strengthening of the Veterinary Services through PVS Gap Analysis and Evaluation was emphasised as a way of assessing the critical competencies for AMR NAP implementation.

Dr Laetitia Gahimbare, AMR Technical Officer at WHO AFRO, gave details about the work of the Tripartite partnership to fight AMR. She reiterated the history of the Tripartite collaboration on One Health and the subsequent Tripartite collaboration agreement following the signing of a memorandum of understanding between FAO, OIE and WHO in 2018. Her presentation highlighted the collaboration of the Tripartite partners on the continent, resulting in the development of a joint work plan, paving the way for joint programme implementation, including the celebration of World Antimicrobial Awareness Week (WAAW) and AMR Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) country projects.

Dr Pidemnewe Pato, Project Officer and Regional Coordinator of the REDISSE Project at the OIE Regional Representation for Africa, gave details about the work done under the REDISSE project, also to fight AMR. The following ongoing activities were highlighted: capacity building of OIE national Focal Points for Veterinary Products, data collection, and implementation of AMR MPTF projects.

Some chat and poll interactive activities were organised, allowing the Regional Commission to conclude that:

- There is a need to reinforce the capacity of Veterinary Services to collect data on antimicrobial use (AMU) and to scale up awareness on prudent use of antibiotics. Members asked for support to develop and implement their national plans, and to update their legislations relating to the use of antimicrobial agents and good governance of national monitoring systems.
- It is important to increase Members' capacity to detect antimicrobial residues in animal source foods in order to ensure quality control in food chains.
- AMR-related activities that Veterinary Services are involved in include joint coordination and implementation with the Ministry of Health, prioritising and harmonising of AMR activities across sectors and integrating AMR in departmental work plans. Very few Veterinary Services are currently sharing AMR and AMU data for comparison across sectors. There is also a need to combine data on AMU in aquatic and terrestrial animals.
- The biggest challenges facing Veterinary Services to control the spread of AMR, as cited by participants, are: poor regulation of antimicrobials, limited human capacity for AMR laboratory testing, lack of AMR pathogen surveillance along the livestock value chain, availability of substandard and falsified veterinary medicines, lack of good data on AMR in animals and illegal smuggling of veterinary medicines.
- Establishing a Joint human-animal regulatory authority is encouraged and could support compliance with national, regional and international standards on AMR and AMU and the harmonisation of regulations and the standards for market authorisation in the region.
- Close collaboration with the environmental sector is needed, to take into account the environmental factors that may promote AMR, especially through water and wastewater pathways from farms or pharmaceutical manufacturing sites, and its link to livestock and food production.

OIE Strategy for Aquatic Animal Health

Dr Stian Johnsen, Chargé de mission at the OIE Standards Department, presented an overview of the draft OIE Strategy for Aquatic Animal Health, 2021-2025 (to be launched in May 2021). The Aquatic Strategy aims to improve aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide, contributing to sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security, thereby supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals. The main drivers for developing this strategy are: 1) aquatic animal production is becoming increasingly important with the intensification in demand for aquatic products and trade; 2) aquatic animal diseases are the major threat to production; and 3) efforts to manage aquatic animal health have not kept pace with growing risk. The main objectives of the strategy are that 1) OIE international standards for aquatic animal health meet Members' needs to manage risks, facilitate safe trade and improve aquatic animal health and welfare; 2) OIE programmes support the strengthening of the aquatic animal health services of OIE Members (capacity building); 3) response to emerging aquatic animal health issues of

regional or global concern are coordinated and timely (resilience); and 4) the OIE's capacity to provide global aquatic animal health leadership is strengthened.

OIE Sub-Regional workshop on Antimicrobial Resistance in Aquaculture: Durban Meeting Recommendations

Dr Kevin Christison, Member of the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission, stated that that aquaculture production in sub-Saharan Africa had increased by 70% compared to the previous decade, and accounted for 0.5% of global aquaculture production and 27% of Africa aquaculture production (including North Africa and Egypt). Dr Christison pointed out that aquaculture provides a source of income and animal protein and nutrition. He presented the recommendations of the OIE Sub-Regional Workshop on Antimicrobial Resistance in Aquaculture in the SADC region, held in Durban, South Africa, on 26-28 November 2019. The Workshop recommendations are available via the following link: <https://rr-africa.oie.int/wp-content/uploads/2019/12/recommemdatons-from-the-oie-workshop-on-amr-in-aquaculture-durban-2019-001.pdf>

Following both presentations and a chat exercise, the Regional Commission concluded that the main aquatic animal health challenge for Members were: outbreaks of fish diseases such as Epizootic Ulcerative Syndrome (EUS), weak surveillance systems for aquatic diseases, limited or lack of involvement of the aquaculture sector in fish disease surveillance activities, lack of animal health specialists for aquaculture disease surveillance, and absence of legislation and policy on aquatic animal health.

Finally, Members should focus on capacity building in aquatic health and strengthen and establish diagnostic facilities for early detection, reporting and response, thereby enhancing the aquaculture industry in the region.

Progress towards PPR eradication

Dr Anna-Maria Baka, Chargée de mission at the OIE Status Department, provided an update on the OIE Action Plan in support of the PPR Global Eradication Programme (GEP), highlighting the progress made with regard to the strategy, the budget and donor liaison and the regional roadmaps. An overview of the official recognition of PPR free status and the endorsement of national official control programmes was also presented, along with details of specific training on official recognition procedures provided through Regional Workshops. Since the launch of the PPR Strategy in April 2015, there have been 13 new official recognitions, five of which concerned countries in Africa: Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Madagascar and Namibia (zone).

Prof. Idriss Oumar Alfaroukh, Regional Coordinator of the Animal Health Component of the Regional Project to Support Pastoralism in the Sahel (*Projet Régional d'Appui au Pastoralisme au Sahel*) (PRAPS) implemented by the OIE (CILSS/OIE agreement) and which brings together Burkina Faso, Mali, Mauritania, Niger, Senegal and Chad, provided a brief overview on progress towards eradicating PPR in West and Central Africa by 2030.

The conclusions of the second roadmap review workshops for the implementation of the strategy (for West Africa from 5 to 7 March 2019 and Central Africa from 13 to 15 November 2017), as well as the work carried out by the OIE within the framework of the PVS Pathway, showed that all countries had their National Strategic Plan (NSP) for PPR eradication by 2030, but the implementation situation remained different from one country to another, with limited funding available (the majority of countries being at stage 2 of the strategy).

Three levels had been identified according to the PPR situation and the implementation of the PPR eradication strategy in the different countries:

- The countries of West Africa (WA) and Central Africa (CA) where PPR has never been observed (Cabo Verde, Guinea Bissau and Sao Tome and Principe): for these countries, the NSP/PPR

foresees the need to demonstrate the absence of the virus (epidemiological evaluation) and to request recognition by the OIE as a country free from PPR.

- The countries of WA and CA where PPR is endemic have been subdivided into two sub-groups according to the dynamics of the implementation of the strategy (Members of the Regional Support Project pastoralism in the Sahel (PRAPS) and those not covered by this project).
- Countries benefiting from PRAPS (a project funded with the support of the World Bank) have adopted a common strategy aimed at making PPR control activities part of the PPR global eradication vision. Such activities include: technical support, policy development and update, regular updating of NSPs, supporting the OIE regional coordination work, harmonisation of vaccination campaign modalities, deployment of project performance indicators including traceability of small ruminants during vaccination campaigns, setting up an epidemiological database, carrying out post-vaccination seromonitoring, acquisition of vaccines with diluent and accompanied by a control certificate from AU-PANVAC, and use of facilities granted by the OIE PPR Vaccine Bank, among others. A PRAPS 2 project is planned for 2022 to support the efforts of these six countries in strengthening the capacities of their Veterinary Services and the implementation of their NSPs to eradicate PPR.
- For WA and CA countries that are not covered by PRAPS, success in the implementation of the PPR eradication strategy relies on the development of their NSPs (technical and political validation still needs to be carried out in most countries), targeted vaccination in “sensitive areas” and strengthening of veterinary laboratories through various projects, among others.

In general, the major constraints faced by national Veterinary Services in the implementation of their NSPs were, among others, the lack of Veterinary Services’ capacities, the lack of financial resources, including the capacity to cover the costs of vaccination, and lack of knowledge regarding the size of the national herd.

PVS Pathway, Laboratory Twinning and OIE/FAO joint PPR activities carried out or available to all Members in support of progress on PPR eradication were also reported during the presentations.

Regional perspectives and peculiarities regarding epidemiological situations and activities relating to PPR were also provided. This encouraged discussions among participants, calling for example for harmonised regional approaches in those areas having similar epidemiological conditions.

Veterinary Workforce Development

Dr Bachir Souley Kouato, Regional Technical Coordinator of the Project “Professionalisation of Veterinary Paraprofessionals” (P3V), presented a brief overview of the importance of developing the veterinary workforce in the region.

Following the presentation, the Regional Commission for Africa noted that:

- In many developing countries, the qualified veterinary workforce is either limited or poorly employed, which has a negative impact on livestock productivity.
- The concept of developing the veterinary workforce is fundamentally based on the need to constitute a network of animal health professionals including other categories, in particular veterinary paraprofessionals (VPPs), with the aim of achieving effective control of animal diseases.
- Ideally, a veterinary workforce should be developed in the form of a pyramid with veterinarians at the top due to their role of supervision, monitoring, and control of the interventions of the VPPs, who should be placed under the responsibility of the veterinarians.
- In this regard, the OIE is implementing a number of projects, including:
 - A project funded by the French Development Agency (AFD) and entitled "Professionalisation of Veterinary Paraprofessionals". The overall objective of this project is to improve access to quality Veterinary Services for farmers mainly in West African countries.

- A project supported financially by the German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ), entitled “Prevention and Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases for the benefit of smallholder farmers (PC-TAD)” in Eastern and Southern Africa. The objective of this project is to develop conditions favourable to promoting the professional integration of VPPs into the animal health network and to improve training of VPPs to empower them to provide quality veterinary services to help small ruminant farmers to control PPR.
- And, finally, there is a third OIE initiative, supported by the United States of America, for Capacity building of veterinary paraprofessionals. The project aims to promote the implementation of the OIE Competency Guidelines for Veterinary Paraprofessionals and the OIE training course recommendations for veterinary paraprofessionals.

Update on the GF-TADS situation for Africa

Dr Karim Tounkara, OIE Regional Representative for Africa, speaking in his capacity as provider of the GF-TADS Regional Secretariat, informed the participants of the challenges encountered in preparing for the 10th Meeting of the Regional GF-TADS Steering Committee. He assured the participants that all necessary actions were being taken for the meeting to be held as soon as possible in 2021.

Reflections on the meeting

At the end of the Day 2 session, the participants were asked to reflect on the meeting using the Mentimeter tool. The first question they were asked was “How important is each of these for you? - Pandemic response, Wildlife health, AMR, Aquatic health, PPR, Rabies, and OIE-WAHIS. They were asked to rate them on a scale from “not important” to “critical”. The majority of participants responded that the above items/topics discussed during the Conference were critical, as shown in the graph below.

How important is each of these for you? / Quelle importance accordez-vous à chacun des éléments suivants?



The participants were also asked to describe their feelings about the Conference, and many stated that the conference had been informative, interactive, interesting, excellent, well organised etc., as shown below.

Dr Malek Zrelli started by welcoming Delegates to the closed session and quickly running through the days' programme. He presented several internal topics of relevance to the Regional Commission, as follows:

- He began by referring to the Technical Item (with questionnaire) entitled "*African horse sickness and equine influenza: current situation in Africa and disease control measures*", which had been selected at the 87th General Session in 2019 to be presented during the 24th Conference. He noted that, owing to the virtual format adopted for the 24th Conference, it had been decided not to include Technical Items (due to the shortened agenda).
- Dr Zrelli gave the floor to Dr Karim Tounkara, OIE Regional Representative for Africa, to guide the discussions on how to proceed regarding the selection of the Technical Item for the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa to be held in 2023. Dr Tounkara proposed that the OIE will send to all Delegates (for reference) a list of technical items already covered in previous Regional Conferences and ask Members to submit new proposals for the next Regional Conference within a given deadline. This approach was unanimously agreed by participants. Dr Zrelli further emphasised the need to prioritise topics of relevance for the region.
- Next, Dr Zrelli asked the Delegates present if any country wished to host the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa.
- The Delegate of Botswana expressed his country's interest in hosting the 25th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa in 2023.
- The proposal was endorsed unanimously.
- Lastly, Dr Zrelli referred to the elections to the various OIE governing bodies, to be held during the 88th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates in May 2021. He noted that elections would be held for the members of the Specialist Commissions, the members of the OIE Council and the members of the Bureau of the Regional Commission, as well as for the position of Director General. He added that, as the 2020 General Session had been cancelled, Dr Eloit's term of office as Director General had been extended for few months, until May 2021.
- To reinforce this, Dr Tounkara was given the floor to briefly remind the Delegates of the process leading to elections of candidates, which has already been communicated to them. This item was purely for purposes of reminding Delegates and not for discussion as the process is already underway.
- Dr Bothe Michael Modisane, Past President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates, was given the floor. He appreciated the support he had received from his fellow Delegates, the OIE and the African Union in his tenure in these positions of responsibility. He also thanked the Regional Economic Communities (RECs) in the coordination role they play to facilitate the OIE mandate. He wished the same support to be accorded to the future Council and Commission Members.
- Finally, the President of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa, Dr Honore N'Lemba Mabela, declared the meeting officially closed wishing everybody good continuation in their activities.

List of International and Regional Organisations as well as institutions and donor agencies attending the Conference

African Union - Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC)
African Small Companion Animal Network (AFSCAN) WSAVA Foundation
African Union - Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR)
African Union (AU)
Arab Maghreb Union (UMA)
Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation
Botswana National Veterinary Laboratory (BNVL)
Botswana Vaccine Institute (BVI)
Centre National de Veille Zoosanitaire, Tunisia (CNVZ)
Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa (COMESA)
Department of Tropical Veterinary Medicine (DTVM) University of Pretoria, South Africa
East African Community (EAC)
Economic Commission for Livestock, Meat and Fish Resources (CEBEVIRHA)
Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS)
ECOWAS Regional Animal Health Centre
European Commission (EC)
Federal Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development (Bundesministerium für wirtschaftliche Zusammenarbeit und Entwicklung) (BMZ) German Government
Fleming Fund (Mott MacDonald)
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
French Development Agency (AFD) French Government
Global Alliance for Livestock Veterinary Medicines (GALVmed)
Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC) Pan-African Rabies Control Network (PARACON)
Italian Government
Indian Ocean Commission (COI)
Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD)
International Centre for Insect Physiology and Ecology (<i>icipe</i>)
International Committee of the Red Cross
International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI)

Inter-State School of Veterinary Sciences and Medicine of Dakar (EISMV)
Livestock Vaccines Innovation Fund (LVIF) International Development Research Centre (IDRC) Canada
Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Institute (OVRI), South Africa
African Union - Pan African Tsetse and Trypanosomiasis Eradication Campaign (PATTEC)
African Union - Pan African Veterinary Vaccine Centre (PANVAC)
Permanent Interstate Committee for Drought Control in the Sahel (CILSS)
ReACT Africa
Southern African Development Community (SADC)
United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP)
US Agency for International Development (USAID) US Government
US Defense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) US Government
West African Economic and Monetary Union (WAEMU)
West African Health Organization (WAHO)
World Animal Protection
World Health Organization (WHO)
WorldFish Centre