REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS

Paris, May 27 2013

The OIE Regional Commission for the Americas met on 27 May 2013 at the Maison de la Chimie, Paris, at 2:00 p.m. The meeting was attended by 93 participants, including Delegates and observers from 23 Members of the Commission and representatives from 7 international or regional organisations:

Members of the Commission: Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, Guatemala, Haiti, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, United States of America and Uruguay.

International/regional organisations: CAN53, CVP54, IICA55, OIRSA56, PAHO-PANAFTOSA57, World Bank, WSPA

The meeting was chaired by Dr John Clifford, President of the Regional Commission for the Americas and Delegate of the United States of America, seconded by Dr Luis Osvaldo Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas, Dr Carlos Correa Messuti, Past President of the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and Delegate of Uruguay, Dr Guilherme H. Figueiredo Marques, Vice-President of the Regional Commission and Delegate of Brazil, Dr Miguel Ángel Azañón Robles, Vice-President and Delegate of Guatemala, and Dr Mark Trotman, Secretary General of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas and Delegate of Barbados.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

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

2. Financial contributions of Members to the OIE

Dr Carlos Correa, Past President of the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and Delegate of Uruguay, described the status of Members’ contributions. Although there are still outstanding contributions from few Members, he highlighted with enthusiasm that some countries, on a voluntary basis, decided to upgrade their contribution category to the OIE.

He proposed that, when possible, other countries increase their contribution category.

53 CAN: Andean Community
54 CVP: Permanent Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone
55 IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
56 OIRSA: International Regional Organization for Plant Protection and Animal Health
57 PAHO: Pan American Health Organization - PANAFTOSA: Pan American Foot and Mouth Disease Center
3. **Report on the activities of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas**

Dr John Clifford, President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas and Delegate of the United States of America, began by reporting that the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas had met several times in 2012. The meetings had addressed administrative and technical matters. The President of the Regional Commission said that the latest meetings of the Bureau of the Regional Commission had been held during the 21st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas and prior to the 81st General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates. The next Bureau meeting was scheduled to take place just before the OIE Regional Conference on Animal Welfare to be held in Montevideo (Uruguay) at the end of 2013.

The administrative activities discussed by the Bureau of the Regional Commission included: the status of Member Countries contributions; planning for the next Regional Conference in Mexico in November 2014; and elections for the Council position left vacant by the retirement of Dr Brian Evans.

On the technical side, Dr Clifford said that meetings planned in the region for 2013 included those of CAMEVET\(^{58}\) (Panama), National Focal Points for animal welfare (Uruguay) and National Focal Points for aquatic animal diseases (Mexico).

Dr Clifford highlighted the success of the 21st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas, held in Bridgetown (Barbados) from 26 to 29 November 2012, which had been attended by more than 30 countries in the region, including 6 non-member countries.

Lastly, the President discussed the OIE Global Conference on Veterinary Education and the Role of the Veterinary Statutory Body, to be held in Brazil in the first week of December 2013.

4. **Report of the activities and work programme of the OIE Regional Representation for the Americas and the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for Central America, including Focal Point Seminars**

Dr Luis O. Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas, presented a summary of the activities of the Regional Representation (Buenos Aires) and Sub-Regional Representation (Panama).

Dr Barcos reported that the Regional Representation would continue to coordinate regular meetings of the Bureau of the Regional Commission to follow up on: the conclusions of the Regional Conference in Barbados in 2012; the organisation of the next Regional Conference in Mexico in 2014; and the work programme for the Americas.

He said that the participation of Member Countries in the updating of OIE standards would be promoted by building the capacity of Veterinary Services, including in the area of aquatic animal health, by holding seminars for Delegates and National Focal Points and by promoting the implementation of OIE PVS Pathway missions, including building the capacity of the region’s laboratories. He reported on the interest of the Permanent Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone (CVP) in having PVS Evaluation missions conducted in its Member Countries every two years as well as OIE PVS missions for the evaluation of their aquatic animal health services, reflecting a growing interest in this issue among Central American countries. He reported on actions in the Central American sub-region to implement the OIE recommendations on the competencies of graduating veterinarians.

\(^{58}\) CAMEVET: Committee of the Americas for Veterinary Medicines
He described activities to ensure OIE membership for countries in the Caribbean that are not yet OIE Members.

He also described activities to ensure the effective implementation of OIE standards on foot and mouth disease (FMD), including: promoting an agreement between the OIE and the Andean Community (CAN) to implement actions at borders; interaction with regional and international organisations based on the FAO/OIE Global FMD Control Strategy; and the occurrence of a regional seminar entitled “Required actions to achieve and maintain the status of free from Foot and Mouth Disease”.

Dr Barcos reported that a questionnaire had been sent to ascertain the degree of progress made by countries in the region in disseminating and implementing the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for the Americas, which had been approved by the latest Regional Conference. As feedback thus far had been poor, he urged Delegates to answer the questionnaire.

He reported that a videoconference on acute hepatopancreatic necrosis syndrome had been coordinated with the OIE Reference Laboratory for shrimp diseases (University of Arizona, United States of America) and Central American countries had been provided with information to assist them in adopting further preparedness measures to counter this potential disease threat.

He said that, following a regional seminar for OIE National Focal Points for veterinary laboratories in Mexico in 2012, work would continue on implementing a web application to share information on the capabilities of national laboratories in the region.

He reported on meetings with international organisations as part of the GF-TADs. In this connection, he added that coordination would continue and relations would be strengthened with international organisations, producer organisations, industry, researchers, donors and universities.

He concluded by detailing planned activities to be carried out in 2013 and 2014, thanking Member Countries that are providing financial support.

5. Selection of a Technical Item (with questionnaire) to be proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the 83rd General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates, to be held in May 2015

The Regional Commission proposed the following Technical Items (with a questionnaire to Members) for inclusion in the agenda of the 83rd General Session:

- “Public health impact of antimicrobials for veterinary use and their economic repercussions”
  and
- “The process of assessing intervention options as a tool to compare different methods to address a particular disease event”

6. Date and venue of the 22nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas to be held in November 2014

The Delegate of Mexico confirmed his country’s offer to host the 22nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas. The Conference will be held in Guanajuato (Mexico) from 10 to 14 November 2014.
7. **Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 22nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas**

The Regional Commission proposed the following Technical Item (with questionnaire) for inclusion in the agenda of the 22nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas:

- “Veterinary education on aquatic animals and its impact on aquatic animal disease control strategies in the region”

8. **Recommendations of the 21st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas held in Barbados from 26 to 29 November 2012**

Dr Guilherme H. Figueiredo Marques, Delegate of Brazil and Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas, said that that the recommendation arising from Technical Item I entitled “Disaster management: the role and preparedness of Veterinary Services”, was based on the relationship between natural and technological disasters and the incidence of emerging and re-emerging animal disease, including zoonoses, which called for joint and coordinated action by Veterinary Services and other sectors, including public health. He added that the level of involvement of Veterinary Services in the prevention phase of the disaster reduction cycle was low.

The recommendations for Veterinary Authorities included the need for them to participate in developing disaster reduction plans and to form partnerships with other stakeholders, as well as to exchange expertise between countries, together with the appropriate human and material resources. The recommendations for the OIE included supporting Veterinary Services through the OIE PVS Tool, and greater involvement in disaster risk reduction and management, including forging closer links with the Secretariat of the United Nations International Strategy for Disaster Reduction (UNISDR). The recommendations also mentioned the need for training, both for Veterinary Services staff and undergraduate students, and support for the Collaborating Centre specialised in the issue.

In relation to Technical Item II, entitled “Innovative strategies for strengthening regional animal health networks”, he said that the transboundary nature of animal diseases and global trade required Veterinary Services to even more fulfil their duties in line with OIE standards. He also reminded the activities of the Caribbean Animal Health Network (CaribVET) as an example of a collaborative network bringing together Veterinary Services, academia, regional and international organisations, diagnostic laboratories and research institutions (including OIE Reference Laboratories) to provide technical support for improving animal health and veterinary public health in the Caribbean.

Recommendations included promoting the consolidation of existing regional animal health networks, creating new networks where appropriate and assisting countries, encouraging the participation of universities, research centres, OIE Reference Centres, interested partners and other relevant stakeholders, as well as promoting network sustainability, for which the support of OIE Members and other stakeholders is crucial, sharing best practices, information, knowledge and resources. A further recommendation was that the OIE should establish cooperation and collaboration agreements with these networks, as well as a procedure for their international recognition.

9. **Candidates for the Bureau of the Regional Commission and the Council**

Dr Carlos Correa Messuti said that the retirement of Dr Brian Evans as Delegate of Canada to the OIE called for the election of a replacement to his position in the Council until 2015.
The Regional Commission voted to elect Dr John Clifford, OIE Delegate for the United States of America, to the position of Council Member.

In addition, Dr Guilherme H. Figueiredo Marques, current Vice-President of the Regional Commission, was unanimously elected as President of the Regional Commission to replace Dr Clifford.

Dr Mark Trotman will become Vice-President and Dr Glen Halze Hodgson, Delegate of Peru, was elected to take over his position as Secretary General.

The composition of the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas until 2015 is as follows:

- President: Dr Guilherme H. Figueiredo Marques (Brazil)
- Vice-President: Dr Miguel Angel Azañón Robles (Guatemala)
- Vice-President: Dr Mark Trotman (Barbados)
- Secretary General: Dr Glen Halze Hodgson (Peru)

10. World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) – Status of notifications by Members in the Americas

Dr Paula Cáceres, veterinary epidemiologist in the OIE Animal Health Information Department, gave a brief update on the most important aspects of animal disease reporting in the Americas.

She began by emphasising the importance of timely disease reporting by countries through WAHIS, and of their providing further epidemiological information on disease prevention and control in order to maintain transparency, enhance trade, contribute to the global early warning system and disseminate information on the status of disease/health worldwide.

She went on to provide detailed regional information on compliance with reporting for 2012, which revealed that 21 countries in the Americas (66%) had provided complete annual reports on time. Dr Cáceres also reported on how the submission time of six-monthly and annual reports from countries in the Americas had evolved compared with that of all countries reporting to the OIE between 2009 and 2012, showing an overall improvement in the region’s reporting times, which were better than the world median for the first six-monthly and annual reports.

Dr Cáceres described some of the improvements made to the new version of WAHIS in order to improve disease notification in wild species. She said that 63 countries worldwide had submitted their wildlife annual reports, adding that any interested countries that had not yet submitted a report on the section relating to non-OIE listed diseases specific to wildlife were welcome to do so at any time in the near future.

Dr Cáceres concluded by explaining that, in the case of immediate notifications, weekly follow-up reports should be sent even when no cases have been reported, indicating that this is the case.
11. **Regional Animal Welfare Strategy**

Dr Barcos explained that the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy was adopted during the past Conference of the OIE Regional Commission. He reminded that this strategy was providing a regional consultation approach for animal welfare to take into account the governmental and non-governmental sectors involved, as well as coordination between the Regional Representation and the Regional Commission, Delegates and National Focal Points for animal welfare, which will ensure that OIE standards and guidelines be implemented.

He added that progress on the implementation of the Regional Strategy would be reported every two years at Regional Commission meetings.

He stressed the importance of ascertaining country progress with disseminating and implementing the Regional Strategy and urged Delegates to answer the questionnaire sent for this purpose.

Dr Mariela Varas, from the OIE International Trade Department, explained that the Regional Strategy was effective following its adoption by the last Regional Conference. Dr Barcos ended by saying that answers to the questionnaire and progress would be followed up at the next seminar for National Focal Points for animal welfare, to be held in Uruguay in October 2013, and announced that National Focal Points from the European Union Member Countries would be participating in this seminar.

Referring to the circulation of a draft International Organization for Standardization (ISO) standard on animal welfare, based on OIE standards, he urged countries to contact their standardisation agencies to offer their support.

12. **Acute Hepatopancreatic Necrosis Syndrome (AHPNS) – Concerns of the Americas region**

Dr Filiberto Frago, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for Central America, described the status of acute hepatopancreatic necrosis syndrome (AHPNS) caused by *Vibrio parahaemolyticus*, affecting shrimp (*Litopenaeus vannamei* and *P. monodon*), for which histological diagnosis is the only technique currently available.

He said that the disease had not been reported in any country in the Americas thus far but that, based on cases that had occurred in South-East Asia, Central American and Caribbean countries had proposed revising and updating import protocols, implementing an epidemiological surveillance programme involving producers, and developing and updating contingency and emergency plans.

13. **African horse sickness: procedure for recognising historically free countries**

Referring to the new procedure for officially recognising countries as historically free from African horse sickness and the presentation of Dr Lissette Gómez, Delegate of the Dominican Republic to the OIE, Dr Barcos reported that the OIE had decided to continue the previous procedure for a further year, and urged countries historically free from African horse sickness to submit their application for official recognition.

14. **Implementation of the OIE PVS Pathway in the Americas**

Dr Luis Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas, began his presentation by providing Regional Commission Members with a brief overview on the status of implementation of the various OIE PVS Pathway missions undertaken in the region. He indicated the countries that would be eligible for some PVS Pathway mission categories and urged them to officially request such missions.
He went on to provide an update on the specific tools used in the different missions. He explained that all the tools used in the PVS Pathway are regularly updated by experts to ensure that they comply with the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. Regarding the PVS Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services, he indicated that, starting this year, the OIE would be giving countries requesting a PVS evaluation follow-up mission the opportunity to evaluate, upon request, their capacity for implementing the ‘One Health’ concept. He explained that, following the outcomes of pilot missions, the OIE had identified 14 existing Critical Competencies for that purpose. He also reported on the first version of the PVS Tool – Aquatic for evaluating the performance of aquatic animal health services.

After providing some background on how the OIE was developing the “treatment” tools used under the PVS Pathway, Dr Barcos gave details regarding the current and new treatments available to Members. He said that the OIE considered laboratory twinning and the Veterinary Legislation Support Programme as well-established treatments and explained that new treatments had recently been made available to Members, namely PVS Pathway laboratory missions and the possibility of establishing twinning projects between veterinary education establishments and between Veterinary Statutory Bodies.

He reminded the Regional Commission of OIE efforts to share with donors and partners the outcomes of the different missions undertaken through the PVS Pathway, when requested by countries. He indicated that the OIE was also giving countries the opportunity to share, at national level, mission reports with any relevant ministries that might be called upon to support activities to strengthen their Veterinary Services.

Dr Barcos concluded by reiterating that the OIE PVS Pathway was a continuous process aimed at sustainably improving Veterinary Services’ compliance with international standards. He added that the OIE worked ceaselessly to convince governments and donors to support not only the PVS Pathway but also the implementation of its recommendations and outcomes. Lastly, he stated that Veterinary Services could be improved only with the strong commitment and ownership of the countries.

15. Presentations from Organisations that have concluded an official agreement with the OIE

- Permanent Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone (CVP)

Dr Julio Urzúa Sotomayor, CVP Technical Secretary, said that the CVP had been in operation for 10 years and that Southern Cone countries had established it in order to implement coordinated actions in response to a resurgence of foot and mouth disease.

He highlighted the work with the OIE to control foot and mouth disease, resulting in the establishment of high surveillance zones and CVP activities as part of the MERCOSUR Foot and Mouth Disease-free Action Plan (PAMA) and coordination with PANAPTOSA/PAHO-World Health Organization. He emphasised CVP involvement following the foot and mouth disease outbreaks in Paraguay, saying that these animal health events were a regional problem whose solution called for joint action by countries.

He reported that, in response to a case of atypical bovine spongiform encephalopathy detected in Brazil, the CVP had reactivated the ad hoc group to discuss the situation, issue technical recommendations and hold a workshop coordinated by PANAPTOSA.

He described CVP work to strengthen Veterinary Services as part of the mandate of the Ministers of Agriculture of Member Countries, and its current joint work with the OIE.
• Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA)

Dr Abelardo De Gracia, OIRSA’s Regional Coordinator for Animal Health, reported on OIRSA activities in 2012 designed to facilitate access by its Member Countries to world markets for their animal products and by-products by strengthening their Veterinary Services.

He described OIRSA activities in the following areas.
- Aquatic animal health: training in diseases of farmed shrimp and preparation of a manual of good practices for fish.
- Bee health: a bee health course was established for producers, and another will be established for technicians.
- Poultry health: the regional emergency plan for Avian Influenza and Newcastle disease was updated and a simulation exercise was conducted for these diseases.
- Cattle health: prevalence studies for brucellosis and tuberculosis; support for OIE recognition for bovine spongiform encephalopathy status; foot and mouth disease prevention actions; cooperation to build the capacity of the Panama’s laboratory for the diagnosis of vesicular diseases (LADIVES); harmonisation of regional standards for cattle traceability and animal movements.
- Classical swine fever: establishment of an emergency control plan in Guatemala, and strengthened epidemiological surveillance in Mexico, Honduras, Belize, El Salvador and the department of Peten in Guatemala.
- Veterinary medicinal products: preparation of a manual of good practices in the use of veterinary medicinal products.
- Animal welfare: training for National Focal Points by developing a course for Veterinary Services.

As regards collaboration with other organisations, he explained that OIRSA was currently working with the OIE and FAO to revise and update secondary veterinary legislation of the countries of the Sub-region covered by the organisation, with a special emphasis on the control and eradication of brucellosis, tuberculosis and Newcastle disease. OIRSA is working on rabies with FAO and PAHO. He also reported that a regional group would be set up to tackle transboundary animal diseases, with the support of the Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service (APHIS) and the University of Iowa (USA).

• Andean Community (CAN)

Dr Javier Vargas Estrella, President of the Andean Technical Committee on Agricultural and Livestock Health (COTASA), speaking on behalf of the CAN, described animal health activities in the context of CAN and the Andean Agricultural Health System (SASA), objectives for trade-related sanitary and phytosanitary measures and joint action programmes.

He explained CAN actions to harmonise and set standards, which had included decisions by the Commission of the Andean Community and resolutions by the General Secretariat on risk analysis procedures for exotic diseases and the recognition of disease-free zones or countries.
He also described joint action programmes for foot and mouth disease and classical swine fever, and cooperation and coordination actions with FAO, OIE and PAHO, together with communication and dissemination activities.

Dr Vargas Estrella concluded by describing regulations currently being developed, updated and scheduled for adoption.

16. **Other matters**

Dr Figueiredo Marques showed a video about the Brazilian city of Foz do Iguazu, which would be hosting the forthcoming OIE Global Conference on Veterinary Education and the Role of the Veterinary Statutory Body.

The Secretary of Agriculture of the Brazilian State of Paraná reaffirmed the support that was being given and would continue to be given to the event.

The meeting ended at 6:00 p.m.
Appendix

MEETING OF THE
OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS
Paris, 27 May 2013

Agenda

1. Adoption of the Agenda (Dr John Clifford, Delegate of the United States of America and President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas)

2. Financial contributions of Members to the OIE (Dr Carlos Correa, Delegate of Uruguay and Past President of the World Assembly of Delegates)

3. Report on the activities of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas (Dr John Clifford)

4. Report on the activities and work programme of the OIE Regional Representation for the Americas and the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for Central America, including Focal Point Seminars (Dr Luis Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas)

5. Selection of a Technical Item (with questionnaire) to be proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the 83rd General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates, to be held in May 2015 (Dr Luis Barcos)

6. Date and venue of the 22nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas to be held in November 2014 (Dr Luis Barcos)

7. Selection of the Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 22nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas (Dr Luis Barcos)

8. Recommendations of the 21st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas held in Barbados from 26 to 29 November 2012 (Dr Guilherme H. Figueiredo Marques, Delegate of Brazil and Vice President of the Regional Commission for the Americas)

9. Candidates for the Bureau of the Regional Commission and the Council (Dr Carlos Correa)

10. World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) – Status of notifications by Members in the Americas (Dr Paula Cáceres, OIE Animal Health Inf. Dept)

11. Regional Animal Welfare Strategy (Dr Luis Barcos)

12. Acute Hepatopancreatic Necrosis Syndrome (AHPNS) – Concerns of the Americas region (Dr Filiberto Frago, OIE Sub-regional Representative for Central America)

13. African horse sickness: procedure for recognising historically free countries (Dr Lissette Gomez, Dominican Republic)

14. Implementation of the OIE PVS Pathway in the Americas (Dr Luis Barcos)

15. Presentations from Organisations that have concluded an official agreement with the OIE
   - Permanent Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone (PVC)
   - Organismo Internacional Regional de Sanidad Agropecuaria (OIRSA)
   - Andean Community (CAN)

16. Other matters