REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Paris, 23 May 2016

The OIE Regional Commission for Europe met on 23 May 2016 at the Maison de la Chimie, Paris at 2:00 p.m. The meeting was attended by 141 participants, including Delegates and observers from 45 Members of the Commission and representatives from 14 international or regional organisations:

Members of the Commission: Albania, Armenia, Austria, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, Former Yug. Rep. of Macedonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Moldova, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom, Uzbekistan.


The meeting was co-chaired by both Dr Budimir Plavšić (Serbia), Secretary General of the Commission, and Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Delegate of Germany and Past President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates.

They both welcomed the Delegates, observers and representatives of regional and international organisations. Dr Budimir Plavšić explained that three members of the Bureau of the OIE regional Commission for Europe changed their position over the past year and that election had to occur again in 2016.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

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

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51 EEAS: European External Action Service
52 EEC: Eurasian Economic Commission
53 FESASS: European Federation for Animal Health and Sanitary Security
54 FEI/IHSC: Federation Equestre Internationale/International Horse Sport Confederation
55 FVE: Federation of Veterinarians of Europe
56 ISO: International Organization for Standardization
57 IZSAM: Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell’Abruzzo e del Molise
58 IZSLER: Instituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Lombardia e dell’Emilia Romagna
59 RSPCA: Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals
2. **Report on OIE Council meetings**

Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Delegate of Germany and Past President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates, began her presentation by providing details on Council members and the geographical rotation of the office of President of the OIE. She pointed out that it was customary for the President to have first held the office of Vice-President, which demanded a degree of continuity of the Delegate in question.

Dr Schwabenbauer then informed Delegates that the OIE Council had met three times since the last General Session at which the Council was elected. The meetings were held in October 2015, February 2016 and May 2016 and looked at issues of strategic importance for the OIE, including major administrative matters, some of which would be presented to the 84th General Session in the form of draft resolutions. She added that the Council had continued to discuss implementation of the Sixth Strategic Plan (2016-2020), particularly at the February 2016 meeting.

Dr Schwabenbauer provided a brief review of the most important issues addressed at the Council meetings, as follows:

1. Detailed appraisal of the 83rd General Session with a view to suggesting improvements for the 84th General Session.

2. Considering the significantly improved recovery of arrears in recent years, the Council wished to review the procedure for implementing Article 5 of the General Rules of the OIE. The Council decided that Member Countries with arrears of five years or more would not be entitled to vote at the 2016 General Session and their Delegates would not receive the Delegate's allowance.

3. A specific point was emphasised with regard to the procedure for accessing dossiers from Member Countries seeking recognition for official status: namely that Member Countries applying for recognition of their status are required to respond, within 10 days, to requests from other Member Countries for information on the dossier within the 60-day commenting period.

4. After receiving requests for new OIE Representations to be opened, the Council decided that it would first have to consider which criteria need to be taken into account when deciding whether to open a new OIE office, given that the Organisation is already experiencing financial difficulties with the operation of several Representations.

5. The Council endorsed the principle of a performance evaluation framework document for the OIE Specialist Commissions and suggested that indicators be used. All the Presidents and Members of the four Specialist Commissions have been informed of this new procedure. The Council examined the initial proposals for establishing an evaluation grid.

6. The Council also encouraged efforts to make the Spanish and French language versions of Specialist Commission reports available as quickly as possible to provide sufficient time for comments.

7. It discussed the issue of access to reports of the *ad hoc* groups and the possibility of making these reports available on the website.

8. The Council considered agreements with other international organisations. The Council approved the signing of agreements with the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD), the Secretariat of the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES) and the Indian Ocean Commission.
9. It discussed the platform provided in the Asia/Pacific region to facilitate the exchange of information among countries in the region. This facility does not exempt Member Countries from submitting their comments officially to the OIE. This initiative could be extended to the other regions if it proves successful following several months in operation.

At the Council meetings in February and May 2016, special attention was paid to administrative, budgetary and statutory issues, as well as to the preparation of the 84th General Session.

Dr Schwabenbauer reported that with regard to preparing the 84th General Session, the Council considered proposals from the Director General on the organisation of the General Session and reviewed the Delegates’ nominations for awards in the Gold and Merit categories. The Council also validated the working programme presented by the Director General, prior to its approval by the Assembly, as well as the new organisational chart, which will be finalised and implemented after the General Session. She said that, specifically for the Europe region, the Council approved to close the Regional Representation for Eastern Europe in Sofia by summer 2016 and to reinforce the Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels.

Dr Schwabenbauer also emphasized the need for greater collaboration between the OIE Council and the Regional Commissions and OIE Regional Offices. Finally, she encouraged all countries of Europe to increase the category of their statutory contributions to the OIE, in addition to possibly make voluntary contributions through the well-established OIE World Animal Health and Welfare Fund.

3. Report on the activities and work programme of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels, the OIE Regional Representation in Moscow, and the OIE Sub-Regional FMD Coordination Unit Office in Astana

Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, and Dr Mereke Taitubayev, Head of the OIE Sub-Regional Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Coordination Unit Office in Astana, presented the work programme of all the OIE Representations in Europe.

With regard to the OIE Regional Representation in Moscow (RR Moscow), information was provided on meetings and visits, including high-level officials’ meetings.

Details were also provided regarding meetings already held by, or to be held by RR Moscow over the coming months, including National Focal Point seminars and meetings and capacity building activities relating to the OIE Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe, as well as OIE ‘train the trainers’ workshops on animal welfare during transport and slaughter.

RR Moscow is the region’s contact point for providing support on using the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and related database interface. RR Moscow is also involved in diplomatic dialogue with the Russian authorities.

Details were also provided regarding additional RR-Moscow activities planned for 2016.

As regards the Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels (SRR-Brussels), Dr Leboucq provided details on the staff situation: the office is staffed by one officer, Dr N. Leboucq, the OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels. However, SRR-Brussels does host Mr O. Stucke, whom the World Health Organization (WHO) has made available to the OIE on a part-time basis to work on matters relating to global risk communication.
Details were also provided on the SRR-Brussels work programme for 2016, which follows on from previous programmes and is in line with the OIE Sixth Strategic Plan (2016-2020). The work programme focuses on the following main areas of intervention.

- Participation in OIE regional activities in Europe, in close collaboration with the OIE Offices in Moscow and Astana: in its capacity as secretariat for the OIE Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe, SRR-Brussels has continued to implement the platform’s 2014-2016 Action Plan, organising a series of activities to build the capacity of Veterinary Services (see specific summary on the platform’s activities). It was agreed that, in light of the results already achieved by the platform in terms of regional dialogue and greater awareness of the subject in the region, it would be desirable for the platform to have a second action plan. SRR-Brussels also participates at a technical level in OIE regional seminars for National Focal Points and OIE Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) Pathway activities.

- Interfacing with institutions/organisations with headquarters in Brussels, through work meetings primarily on European (but sometimes also global) issues: during the first half of 2016, SRR-Brussels has taken part in a number of coordination meetings with its partners, including the European Commission, World Customs Organization (WCO), Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and European Federation for Animal Health and Sanitary Security (FESASS). In addition, SRR-Brussels actively contributes to practical implementation of the Cooperation Agreement between the OIE and the WCO, with the preparation of a first joint workshop on implementing the new World Trade Organization (WTO) Trade Facilitation Agreement.

- Implementation of the activity programme of the Global Framework for Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) for Europe, in particular with regard to African swine fever (ASF): in its capacity as the secretariat for the Standing Group of Experts on African swine fever in the Baltic and Eastern European region (SGE), SRR-Brussels helped to organise expert missions to the seven countries involved in the initiative, as well as the feedback meeting (Moscow, March 2016). Based on the results, a capacity-building programme for countries, with particular regard to ASF surveillance in domestic pigs and wild boar, is being prepared under the auspices of GF-TADs, mainly using European Commission tools, especially the Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF) programme.

- Contribution to the work of the Global GF-TADs Working Groups on FMD and peste des petits ruminants (PPR): within this framework, and following the adoption of the Global Strategy for the Control and Eradication of PPR in Abidjan (Côte d’Ivoire) in April 2015, SRR-Brussels participated in the meetings to launch regional ‘PPR roadmaps’ for East Africa, the Middle East, West Eurasia and South Asia. SRR-Brussels took part in the third FMD Roadmap Meeting for the Middle East and the seventh FMD Roadmap Meeting for Western Eurasia.

Information was then provided on the following activities planned by SRR-Brussels in the second half of 2016: (a) technical support as and when required for the forthcoming seminars for National Focal Points in Europe (for wildlife, in Belarus in July 2016; others to be confirmed); (b) continuation of the activities of the OIE Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe, especially the organisation of a second workshop on stray dog population management, for Balkan countries (Albania, June 2016); (c) preparation of the first workshop on long-distance transport of animals for slaughter (second half of 2016, to be confirmed); and (d) follow-up of the awareness campaign on stray dogs in Balkan
countries, focusing on responsible dog ownership to reduce the number of strays; (e) collaboration in the organisation of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe (Portugal, September 2016). Details of the aforementioned activities are published on the OIE regional website, managed by SRR-Brussels.

Dr Taitubayev explained that the OIE Sub-Regional FMD Coordination Unit Office in Astana had organised and conducted several meetings, including: Regional Workshop on the OIE procedure for the official recognition of Member Countries’ disease status and for the endorsement of official national control programmes for FMD (March 2015 Astana, Kazakhstan); sixth Regional FMD Roadmap Meeting for West Eurasia (April 2015, Almaty, Kazakhstan); closing meeting for the OIE laboratory twinning project on brucellosis between Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell’Abruzzo e del Molise ‘G. Caporale’ (IZSAM) in Italy and the National Veterinary Reference Centre (NVRC) in Kazakhstan (December 2015, Astana, Kazakhstan); first Regional PPR Roadmap Meeting for Central Asia (February 2016 Almaty, Kazakhstan); seventh Regional FMD Roadmap Meeting for West Eurasia (April 2016, Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan); and commemoration of World Veterinary Day at S. Seifullin Kazakh Agro-Technical University in Astana (Kazakhstan).

Details were also provided on meetings attended by Sub-Regional Coordination Unit representatives, as well as those they are planning to attend up to the end of 2016.

4. **Rinderpest post-eradication activities**

Ms Tianna Brand, Chargée de mission from the OIE Scientific and Technical Department, briefly summarised the rinderpest post-eradication era since 2011 by pointing out positive progress in reducing the risk of re-emergence. In 2015-2016, Australia, Brazil and Switzerland destroyed their stored rinderpest virus-containing materials (RVCM); Botswana transferred all its RVCM to AU PANVAC; and Japan transferred RVCM to the rinderpest holding facility in Tokyo and destroyed its RVCM holdings in other non-approved facilities.

While these efforts are to be commended, global freedom remains at risk while the virus continues to be stored in numerous locations. She highlighted another opportunity to reduce holdings through the “sequence and destroy project” with the United Kingdom’s Pirbright Institute and the French Agricultural Research Centre for International Development (CIRAD). The aim of the project is to destroy all the RVCM after collecting its full-genome sequences. She encouraged Member Countries to take part in the project.

Finally, she reported that the FAO-OIE Rinderpest Joint Advisory Committee continued to meet to review applications and to advise on policies and future activities in the post-eradication era. In conclusion, she reminded Delegates to maintain their national contingency plans, carry out general surveillance, and continue their annual reporting, as stipulated in Chapter 8.15 of the *OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code*.

5. **Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the 86th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates to be held in May 2018**

The Regional Commission proposed the following technical item (including a questionnaire to Members) to be included in the agenda of the 86th General Session:

− Implementation of OIE standards by OIE Member Countries – state of play and specific capacity building needs
6. **Selection of Technical Item II (without questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe**

The Regional Commission proposed the following technical item (without questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to be held in Portugal:

- Lumpy Skin Disease: current situation in Europe and neighbouring regions and necessary control measures to halt the spread in South-East Europe

7. **Organisation of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, to be held in Lisbon, Portugal from 19 to 23 September 2016**

Professor Álvaro Mendonça, Delegate of Portugal, confirmed that his country was willing and honoured to hold this important regional event and invited all Delegates to attend the conference.

He gave a brief account of the various arrangements that Portugal had made to start organising the conference. Prof. Mendonça provided general information about hotel accommodation and transport, giving assurances that full details would be sent to participants in a timely manner.

He explained that, as September was the peak season for events in Lisbon, no rooms were available at the conference venue before 19 September. Conference participants will be able to reserve rooms only starting from 19 September, the same day on which the conference starts. Consequently and to allow plenty of time on the day of arrival, the opening ceremony will be held at 5 p.m. Registration will open at 2 p.m. Portugal will provide a welcome dinner that evening. He provided other hotel options identified by Portugal in the vicinity of the venue (some being a few subway stops away from the venue, others within walking distance).

To conclude, Prof. Mendonça emphasised the importance of Delegates and other participants to proceed with hotel reservations without delay and, in any case, by no later than 15 July 2016. After that date, the special rate negotiated by the country would no longer be available and availability of rooms could not be guaranteed.

8. **Update on antimicrobial resistance: actions and events since the 83rd General Session**

Dr Elisabeth Erlacher-Vindel, Deputy Head of the OIE Scientific and Technical Department, began her presentation by saying that the 83rd World Assembly of OIE Delegates in 2015 had adopted Resolution No. 26 on combating antimicrobial resistance and promoting the prudent use of antimicrobial agents in animals, following Resolution No. 25 on veterinary products adopted in 2009 and recommendations made at the first OIE Global Conference on the Responsible and Prudent Use of Antimicrobial Agents for Animals in 2013. One major point of Resolution 26 relates to the collection of data on the use of antimicrobial agents in animals with a view to establishing a global database. Major progress has been achieved in this area and OIE Member Countries have made considerable efforts. Indeed, a response rate of over 70% to the challenging questionnaire is seen as a real success. The results of the first phase of the project will be presented under Technical Item 2 on Tuesday.

She went on to explain that Resolution 26 also invited Member Countries to follow the guidance of the WHO Global Action Plan on AMR developed with the support of the OIE and in the spirit of the “One Health” approach. Since the Global Action Plan was adopted in May 2015, the fight against AMR under the FAO/OIE/WHO Tripartite Collaboration has reached an unprecedented political level.
Dr Erlacher-Vindel pointed out that the issue of AMR had been mentioned at the G7 Health Ministers’ meeting in Berlin (Germany) in October 2015, attended by Dr Monique Eloit, as well as at the recent G7 Agriculture Ministers’ meeting in Japan in April 2016. The next step envisioned is a resolution or high-level document on AMR endorsed by the upcoming United Nations General Assembly in September 2016. To prepare this important event, in April 2016 the Tripartite hosted a High-Level Dialogue on AMR at the United Nations in New York to raise awareness of AMR and to invite participants to follow up with their respective Ministers of Foreign Affairs.

Dr Erlacher-Vindel concluded by saying that the OIE and its Member Countries had made major efforts in recent years to update and complete the standards and to adopt ambitious recommendations. Dr Erlacher-Vindel pointed to the need to collectively communicate on these achievements and to seek solidarity to support Member Countries in progressing with the implementation of standards, taking a step-wise approach. To this end, she noted that the OIE Council had proposed Technical Item 2 on Combating Antimicrobial Resistance through a “One Health Approach”: Actions and OIE Strategy, which would address OIE achievements and projects and would provide the basis for the OIE strategy.

9. **Status of notifications by Members in Europe**

Dr Marija Popovic, Chargée de mission at 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 20 May 2016. She started by providing detailed regional information on compliance with reporting for 2015, separately for terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases. Then, she showed the percentage of Members with outstanding reports and encouraged them to submit the reports, not only for 2015 but also for previous years, emphasising the importance of timely disease reporting by countries/territories through the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS), and of their providing other epidemiological information on disease prevention and control. Dr Popovic also gave an overview of the OIE-listed diseases and infections currently of major interest in the region. Dr Popovic concluded by presenting the results of the online survey “Evaluation of WAHIS, 10 years after the launch”, which was designed to gather feedback from Veterinary Authorities on their level of satisfaction as WAHIS users, the challenges experienced during the notification process and suggestions for improvement. She highlighted the topics most frequently cited by respondents in the region as needing improvement.

The Delegate of Greece requested that ‘Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia’ be used instead of ‘Macedonia’. A representative of the Russian Delegation proposed to change the OIE Code chapter on notification of diseases to include the obligation for endemic countries to report any outbreak within 20 to 50 km from a border using an immediate notification procedure, in order to alert the neighbouring countries on the need to take immediate preventive measures. Dr Marija Popovic indicated that this request will be possibly considered by the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department and the relevant Specialist Commissions.

10. **Peste des petits ruminants situation in Georgia**

Dr Mikheil Sokhadze, Delegate of Georgia, gave a brief presentation of the PPR situation in his country. He began by saying that high mortality in young sheep (1-2 months of age) had been reported on 14 January 2016 on a farm near Georgia’s capital city, Tbilisi. The National Food Agency’s Veterinary Department took immediate action to investigate the outbreak and test the samples locally. Bluetongue was diagnosed by the Ministry of Agriculture laboratory. Quarantine measures, as well as stamping-out of diseased animals
and disinfection/disinsection measures, were conducted in the infected farm. A circular letter was sent to all regional veterinarians concerning suspicious disease in small ruminants. Immediate notification was sent to OIE through WAHIS regarding the suspected first occurrence of a listed disease in the country (notification dated 23 January 2016).

He explained that samples were submitted to the Pirbright Institute in the United Kingdom for confirmation of the preliminary results. As the samples tested negative for bluetongue virus (notification dated 29 January 2016), they were re-tested for PPR, after which PPR virus was confirmed in the samples (notification dated 8 February 2016). Following further investigation, the preliminary misdiagnosis was confirmed as having been caused by a polymerase chain reaction (PCR) failure at the local laboratory.

On 3 February 2016, Georgia’s Chief Veterinary Officer sent an official letter to FAO requesting assistance. In response to the official request, the OIE/FAO Crisis Management Centre-Animal Health (CMC-AH) fielded a rapid deployment team to Tbilisi on 7 February 2016. The overall objective of the mission was to investigate the country’s first ever PPR outbreak and support the government in its response. The CMC-AH team visited several farms and a livestock market close to the initial farm. While signs related to PPR were recognised on two of the four farms visited, no specific signs were noticed in the livestock market. Samples for laboratory diagnosis were collected from live and dead animals on all four farms. The outbreak investigation concluded that PPR infection on the farms found to be infected was new because only young animals were sick, having no maternal antibody protection.

In accordance with the CMC-AH team recommendation, the state Veterinary Service planned and implemented the following actions: establishment of a PPR national strategic plan and a PPR task force led by the CVO; a pre-vaccination survey to evaluate the geographical distribution of current PPR infection; risk-based vaccination of susceptible animals, with 1,300,000 small ruminants vaccinated to date; necessary diagnostic kits were purchased for the laboratory.

Dr Sokhadze concluded by saying that, since then, no clinical cases of PPR had been reported in Georgia. Thanks to the rapid response of the Veterinary Service and swift support from CMC-AH mission recommendations, coupled with mass vaccination of susceptible animals, Georgia succeeded in halting and controlling the disease.

The Delegate of United Kingdom, Dr Nigel Gibbens, asked clarification about the stamping out modalities put in place and the duration of the vaccination campaign. Dr Sokhadze indicated that modified stamping out was applied targeting lambs with clinical signs only and all susceptible animals were vaccinated within two weeks, given the risks associated with nomadic system prevailing in Georgia. Vaccination campaign was carried out by the Veterinary Services in collaboration with other relevant authorities.

11. Latest developments regarding the OIE Regional Platform on Animal Welfare in Europe

Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, began her presentation by saying that, in the second half of 2015 and in 2016, the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels, which provides the secretariat for the OIE Regional Platform on Animal Welfare in Europe, had continued to implement the platform’s three-year action plan, launched in 2013. This included preparing and organising the following important activities relating to the platform’s three priority areas: stray dog population control; transport of animals; and slaughter of animals.

(a) Second train-the-trainers workshop on transport and slaughter for seven Russian-speaking countries (Russia, March-April 2016). An assessment of the first train-the-trainers workshop (Georgia, first half of 2015) showed that most of the participating countries had already increased the number of training sessions at national level for
veterinary inspectors working in local abattoirs and some veterinary education establishments have incorporated this training into the curriculum of veterinary students.

(b) First regional workshop on national strategy for stray dog population management in West Eurasia (Bishkek, Kyrgyzstan, October 2015) and launch of a self-assessment system for these countries to determine their situation in 2016 using the tool developed by the OIE and its Collaborating Centre in Teramo (Italy); the countries took note of Chapter 7.7 of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code on stray dog population control and undertook to comply with it fully by 2030.

(c) Preparation of modules on long-distance transport of animals for slaughter and poultry, to be used in train-the-trainers workshops in late 2016 and in 2017.

(d) Development of the platform’s new website.

(e) Fifth meeting of the platform’s Steering Group (SG5) (Dublin, Ireland, November 2015) and its sixth meeting (SG6) (Teramo, Italy, April 2016), which served to validate the six-monthly programmes already completed (second half of 2015 and first half of 2016) or yet to come (second half of 2016).

Dr Leboucq then reported that, in the second half of 2016, it was planned to hold a second workshop on stray dog management in the Balkans (Albania, June 2016). She noted that the preparation of national roadmaps, based on the results of the self-assessments made in the first half of 2015, would be an important topic during the workshop. The campaign to raise awareness about stray dogs in the Balkans, with a focus on responsible dog ownership and reducing the number of stray dogs, which was launched in May 2016, will also inform discussions during the workshop and will be evaluated in March 2017. There are also plans to organise the first train-the-trainers workshop on long-distance transport of animals for slaughter and poultry, based on the training modules developed in the first half of 2016.

She added that, at the SG5 meeting the members of the platform’s Steering Committee agreed on the need to develop a second action plan for the platform, which would cover the period 2017-2019 and continue along the same lines as the first. Depending on the outcome of forthcoming discussions, the welfare of working horses and the welfare of animals in disasters could be added to the list of topics covered by the platform. Dr Leboucq pointed out that OIE Delegates in Europe would be closely involved in the preparation and validation of the platform’s second action plan, due to be validated at the 85th OIE General Session in May 2017. An external evaluation – to take place at the end of 2016 – will endorse the platform’s first action plan and make useful recommendations for preparing the second action plan. The platform’s initial financial partner, the European Union, has already indicated that it will provide financial support for the second action plan, while a growing number of donors (France, Switzerland, Germany, World Animal Protection, Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals) are also supporting the platform’s activities.

Dr Leboucq concluded by saying that the platform’s new website was being finalised and would contain comprehensive information about the platform, as well as serving as an online forum for regional discussion and dialogue among all European countries.

The Chair of the meeting, Dr Budimir Plavšić, congratulated the OIE for all the work conducted on animal welfare in the region.
12. **Latest developments regarding the Standing Group of Experts on ASF in the Baltic and Eastern Europe region**

Prof. Kazimieras Lukauskas, OIE Regional Representative in Moscow, began his presentation by explaining that ASF was one of the most important pig diseases spreading across Eastern Europe.

Prof. Lukauskas presented an overview of ASF spread from Africa in 2007 to the Caucasus and Eastern Europe.

He said that ASF had been introduced into Georgia in 2007. The disease has spread widely to Armenia, Azerbaijan and throughout the Russian Federation, from where it has continued its spread westwards, with the first outbreak reported in Ukraine in 2012, Belarus in 2013, Lithuania, Latvia and Poland in 2014, and Estonia in 2015.

He stressed the potential risk of the ASF virus entering the European Union.

Prof. Lukauskas went on to provide a number of risk analyses that had been made on potential ASF introduction into the European Union and Asia from Africa and Eastern Europe by several routes of entry.

He explained the main characteristics of the transmission routes of ASF, saying that ASF virus was transmitted mainly through direct contact (between an infected animal and a healthy animal), indirect contact through fomites (such as contaminated products, people or trucks) or biological vectors (soft ticks of the genus Ornithodoros).

Prof. Lukauskas commented on the risk factors for early detection of ASF in Eastern European countries namely; inadequate control programmes, late detection, inadequate surveillance programmes, and weak Veterinary Services.

He pointed out that, in 2014, the OIE, in collaboration with the European Union and the FAO, had established a Standing Group of Experts (SGE) for ASF for which a programme had been approved.

Prof. Lukauskas provided details on the outcomes of the three SGE meetings held since 2014.

Prof. Lukauskas reported that the first SGE meeting (SGE1), held in Minsk (Belarus) in December 2014, had stressed the need for strong cooperation among hunters, environmental authorities and Veterinary Services in order to manage wild boars more effectively. Hunting should be conducted in a manner that avoids movement of wild boars. Management of wild boars should be clearly defined in accordance with the ecological, environmental and sociocultural situation in the region. The SGE reiterated that trust and cooperation could only be built by providing full access to the relevant information.

He added that biosecurity was crucial to prevent the entry and spread of ASF into commercial and backyard pig farms. The prerequisite for achieving this is for Veterinary Services to provide basic information to pig farmers by way of appropriate communication campaigns. Backyard farms practising low biosecurity currently play an important role in the spread of ASF. Given the economic importance of backyard farms in certain areas, the control and biosecurity measures to be implemented in backyard production systems need to be carefully evaluated.

Prof. Lukauskas then reported on the second SGE meeting (SGE2), held in Tallinn (Estonia) in February 2015, which established an expert team and scheduled a set of visits to the various affected countries, as follows: Lithuania, Belarus, Poland, Russia, Latvia, Ukraine, Estonia.
Prof. Lukauskas then provided details on the conclusions of SGE3, held in Moscow (Russia) in March 2016, as follows:

- Surveillance and monitoring activities should be based on the biological characteristics of ASF;
- Surveillance in domestic pigs should be focused on ASF early detection;
- For wild boar, passive surveillance should be enhanced in both infected and risk areas while maintaining the current level of active surveillance; and
- The proportionality and effectiveness of the measures conducted within endangered zones should be re-evaluated taking into consideration the distinctive epidemiological features of ASF, as well as risk patterns.

Prof. Lukauskas concluded by commenting on the resolutions of the meeting between the OIE and the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC) in 2014. He stressed that the key to ASF control was to raise awareness and educate all sectors involved (including farmers, veterinarians, government officials and hunters) to ensure that they understand the alarming socio-economic impact of the disease in endemic areas, prioritise action and grasp the importance of controlling and eradicating this disease.

Dr Leboucq, in her capacity as Secretary of the ASF SGE initiative, recalled that the fourth meeting of the ASF SGE (SGE4) will be held the next day taking advantage of the presence of the Delegates/CVOs of all seven involved countries as well as of Romania and Moldova, also invited to join the initiative.

13. Implementation of the PVS Pathway in Central Asia

Dr Mereke Taitubayev, Head of the OIE Sub-Regional FMD Coordination Unit Office in Astana, began his presentation by saying that Central Asian countries had used the PVS Tool largely to improve the compliance of their Veterinary Services with OIE international standards. As early as 2007, the first PVS Evaluation missions were requested and conducted in Kyrgyzstan, Uzbekistan and Kazakhstan. Tajikistan followed soon after, in 2009, and latterly Turkmenistan, in 2013.

He said that a brief analysis of use made of the PVS Tool showed clearly that two of the countries evaluated appear to be fully aware of the importance and usefulness of the PVS Pathway. Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan have requested additional missions to their initial PVS Evaluation mission: a PVS Gap Analysis mission to get an indicative costing of resources required to implement the country priorities defined; PVS Follow-up missions to assess progress made; and veterinary legislation support to strengthen their legislative framework. Based on the recommendations of their initial PVS Evaluation, they have also requested twinning projects to improve the quality of their Veterinary Services.

A laboratory Twinning project on brucellosis between Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale dell'Abruzzo e del Molise 'G. Caporale' (IZSAM) in Teramo (Italy) and the National Veterinary Reference Centre in Astana (NVRC) (Kazakhstan) ended in December 2015 with a regional meeting to share the lessons learned with other countries. The goal of the laboratory in Kazakhstan, following this Twinning, is to apply to become an OIE Reference Laboratory for brucellosis.

A Twinning project on veterinary education is under way between the National Veterinary School of Toulouse (France) and the Kazakh National Agrarian University of Almaty, working with a consortium of Kazakh universities. After a slow start, the Twinning project has gathered pace, with exchanges of teachers and students taking place this year.
Kyrgyzstan has also requested a Twinning project to improve the implementation of its recently established veterinary statutory body: a first step that had stemmed from the proposal for Kyrgyzstan to play an active participation in the global conference on veterinary education, held in Iguazu (Brazil) in December 2013.

Dr Taitubayev concluded by saying that regular country PVS Evaluation Follow-up missions were useful for assessing, monitoring and supporting progress made – something that Central Asian countries have certainly taken on board. He acknowledged that the main sticking point for them now – funding for future progress – would require a clear regional cooperation programme to be developed to encourage investors and secure the effective support of their own ministries of finance.

14. **Election of the President and the two Vice-Presidents of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe**

Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Delegate of Germany and Past President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates, informed participants that, as the Delegates of Estonia, Spain and Azerbaijan had changed, leaving vacant the positions of President and the two Vice-Presidents of the Regional Commission, a partial election needed to be held.

The Commission unanimously nominated the Delegates of Latvia, Serbia, Austria and Belarus for the offices of President, first Vice-President, second Vice-President and Secretary General of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, respectively.

The membership of the Bureau of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe is as follows:

- **President:** Dr Maris Balodis (Latvia)
- **Vice-President:** Dr Budimir Plavšić (Serbia)
- **Vice-President:** Dr Ulrich Herzog (Austria)
- **Secretary General:** Dr Aliaksandr Subotsin (Belarus)

This decision will be submitted for endorsement by vote of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates during the course of the week.

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

**European Commission**

Dr Bernard Van Goethem highlighted the activities of the European Commission’s Directorate-General for Health and Food Safety in the area of animal health and welfare in Europe, including: transboundary animal disease control programmes in the European Union and neighbouring countries; BTSF activities; the OIE Regional Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe; and other OIE capacity-building activities financed by the European Commission. He also gave an update on the state of play of European Union animal health law.

**Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC)**

The Representative of the Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC) began his presentation by saying that the treaty on the Eurasian Economic Union (EEU) had come into force on 1 January 2015. He explained that the EEU was an international organisation for regional economic integration with international legal personality. The EEU Member States are: Armenia, Belarus, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Russia. The EEC is a permanent supranational regulatory body of the EEU. EEC decisions are binding within the territory of EEU Member States.
He explained that one of the EEC’s main tasks in relation to sanitary and phytosanitary measures were to develop (in accordance with the EEU Treaty) EEU regulatory legal acts to maintain the epizootic and veterinary-sanitary well-being of the EEU territory.

He concluded by saying that cooperation between the EEC and OIE was currently based on a cooperation agreement concluded by the EEC and OIE on 10 January 2014.

**Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)**

Dr Andriy Rozstalnyy, Animal Health and Production Officer at the FAO Regional Office for Europe and Central Asia, began his presentation by saying that FAO provided assistance to countries in Europe and Central Asia on sustainable livestock production, veterinary public health, food safety and animal genetic resource conservation. He added that, in particular, assistance was provided on: development policies and strategies for livestock production and the prevention and control of transboundary animal diseases (ASF, FMD, PPR, contagious caprine pleuropneumonia), including zoonoses such as brucellosis and rabies; emergency response to emerging diseases such as lumpy skin disease and PPR; and providing solutions to challenges faced by Veterinary Services and livestock producers. FAO also assesses livestock and the implementation of programmes for improving livestock breeding, such as enhancing honey bee productivity and assisting rural populations, especially women, in generating income through capacity-building in honey production. FAO fosters public-private dialogue and partnership in such areas as: awareness of ASF risk prevention and control; and support for the establishment and strengthening of professional and community-based organisations, such as associations of veterinary practitioners, farmers and milk producers. Raising awareness of antimicrobial resistance is another important area of FAO’s work in the region.

16. **Other matters:**

The Delegate of Ukraine, Dr A. Verzhykhovskiy, requested that the proposal of the State Scientific Research Control Institute of Veterinary Medicine and Feed Additives in Lviv, Ukraine, to become an OIE Collaborating Center on bee health and bee product food safety be included as part of the agenda of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe (Lisbon, September 2016). The Chair answered that this request will be possibly considered when finalizing the Conference agenda.

The meeting officially ended at 6.35 p.m.
Agenda

1. Adoption of the Agenda (Dr Budimir Plavšić, Delegate of Serbia and Secretary General of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe);
2. Report on OIE Council meetings (Dr Karin Schwabenbauer, Delegate of Germany and Past President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates);
3. Report on the activities and work programme of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels, the OIE Regional Representation in Moscow, and the OIE Sub-Regional FMD Coordination Unit Office in Astana (Dr Nadège Leboucq, OIE Sub Regional Representative in Brussels, Dr Mereke Taitubayev, Head of the OIE Sub Regional FMD Coordination Unit Office in Astana);
4. Rinderpest post-eradication activities (Ms Tianna Brand, Chargée de mission, Scientific and Technical Department);
5. Selection of Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be proposed for inclusion in the agenda of the 86th General Session of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates to be held in May 2018 (Dr Budimir Plavšić);
6. Selection of Technical Item II (without questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe (Dr Budimir Plavšić);
7. Organisation of the 27th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, to be held in Lisbon, Portugal from 19 to 23 September 2016 (Prof. Dr Álvaro Mendonça, Delegate of Portugal);
8. Update on antimicrobial resistance: actions and events since the 83rd General Session (Dr Elisabeth Erlacher-Vindel, Deputy Head, OIE Scientific and Technical Department);
9. Status of notifications by Members in Europe (Dr Marija Popovic, Chargée de mission, OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department);
10. Peste des petits ruminants situation in Georgia (Dr Mikheil Sokhadze, Delegate of Georgia);
11. Latest developments regarding the OIE Regional Platform on Animal Welfare in Europe (Dr Nadège Leboucq);
12. Latest developments regarding the Standing Group of Experts on ASF in the Baltic and Eastern Europe region (Dr Kazimieras Lukauskas, OIE Regional Representative in Moscow);
13. Implementation of the OIE PVS Pathway in Central Asia (Dr Mereke Taitubayev);
14. Election of the President and the two Vice-Presidents of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe (Dr Karin Schwabenbauer);
15. Presentations from organisations that have concluded an official agreement with the OIE:
   - European Commission (EC)
   - Eurasian Economic Commission (EEC)
   - Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO)
16. Other matters.