The OIE Regional Commission for Europe met on 26 May 2008 at the Maison de la Chimie, Paris at 2:30 p.m. The meeting was attended by 109 Delegates and observers from 44 Members of the Commission, and representatives from 7 international and regional organisations:

Members of the Commission: Albania, Andorra, Armenia, Azerbaijan, Belarus, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Bulgaria, Croatia, Cyprus, Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, France, Georgia, Germany, Hungary, Iceland, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, Liechtenstein, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Montenegro, the Netherlands, Norway, Poland, Portugal, Romania, Russia, Serbia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, Ukraine, United Kingdom.

International/regional organisations: Copa-Cogeca, EC, EC71, Eurogroup-ICFAW, FAO-EUFMD, FVE, FVE72, IZS, IZS73, WSPA

The meeting was chaired by Prof. Nikola T. Belev (Bulgaria), President of the Regional Commission, assisted by Dr Patrick J. Rogan (Ireland) and Dr Kazimieras Lukauskas (Lithuania), Vice-Presidents of the Commission.

The President welcomed the Delegates, observers and representatives of the regional and international organisations.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda, described in the Appendix, was unanimously adopted and the annexes related to agenda items were circulated.

2. Contributions of Members to the OIE

The President of the Commission explained that 18 months ago, the OIE Director General sent a letter to 15 countries of the region asking for an increase of contribution category. Most countries answered positively, but answers are still missing from Hungary, Israel, Luxembourg, Poland and Slovenia.
3. Report on the activities of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and of the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe

Dr Nikola T. Belev, President of the Regional Commission and OIE Regional Representative for Eastern Europe, presented the report on the activities of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe and of the OIE Regional Representation for Eastern Europe for the year 2007. He made reference to the series of National Seminars held in 2007 and in the early part of 2008, in Moldova, Russia, Belarus, Ukraine, Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan. He also spoke on the mission of the Ukrainian Ministers and Parliamentarians to Italy. He referred to the rabies conference held in May 2007 at OIE Headquarters, to the Special Meeting of the Regional Commission on FMD and ASF held in Paris in July 2007, and the Washington Conference with the World Bank last October.

The Commission accepted the report.

4. Activities and work programme of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation in Brussels

Dr Caroline Planté, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, presented the report on the activities of the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for the year 2007. She explained the major objectives of this Sub-Regional Representation and the part played by the Representation in the dissemination of information on OIE standards, participation in major OIE programmes, help with the development of the communication system, and assistance in the preparation of further seminars to be held in September 2008 in Uzbekistan and Tajikistan. The Sub-Regional Representation has been involved in international meetings on AI, PPR, FMD, ASF and bluetongue, meetings pertaining to bio-terrorism, and in the OIE Seminar in China using a similar format to that used for the OIE/EC national seminars. Provision of emergency support was given to Georgia and Armenia for ASF. Development and roll out of the website has been completed and further work is under way. The website is accessible at: www.rr-europe.oie.int.

The Commission accepted the report.

5. Election of the Secretary General of the Regional Commission

The proposal to nominate Dr Nikolay Vlasov, new Delegate of Russia, to the OIE, was seconded by Germany and he was unanimously elected as the new Secretary General of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe, replacing Dr Evgueni Nepoklonov (Russia).


Dr Caroline Planté, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, presented the aims of the Conference and the key elements of the resolution adopted. The next Conference for Eurasia will probably take place in 2010. All information and a full report is available on the OIE website.

7. Proposal of a technical item with questionnaire to be included in the agenda of the 78th General Session of the OIE International Committee to be held in May 2010

There were four proposals for a technical item with questionnaire to be included in the agenda of the 78th General Session of the International Committee to be held in May 2010.

A proposal was made by WSPA drawing the attention of the OIE to the situation of rabies in Eurasia and the need to provide technical and logistical support to Members to help provide services to sterilise dogs and cats, to assist in the elimination of rabies. This is seen as important as vaccination alone will not succeed in the elimination of this disease.
The Delegate of France proposed that the topic of the use of veterinary medication, and particularly the development of resistance to antimicrobials, should be put forward by the Regional Commission for Europe. This proposal was supported by a number of Member Country Delegates including Sweden, Czech Republic, Belgium, Azerbaijan, Denmark, Albania, Luxembourg and the UK (this Delegate called for effective cooperative surveillance involving both human and animal health experts on the use of antimicrobial and in particular antibiotics). The Delegate of France also mentioned that the topic of animal feed could be worthy of a technical item at some time in the future.

The Delegate of Croatia proposed an item on the importance of biosecurity measures on farms and in particular biosecurity on small farms as a disease control measure. She commented that it would be useful to have guidelines for the different scenarios that may apply. This was supported by Macedonia.

The Delegate of Spain proposed consideration of the role of wildlife, specifically focusing on the movement of wildlife (including domesticated wildlife), the implication of this movement for the spread of different strains of pathogens and the impact of wildlife movement on on-farm biosecurity. This was supported by Italy, the Netherlands and Portugal. In support of the Spanish proposal, the Italian Delegate referred to an article published 4 years ago by CDC in Atlanta pertaining to “trade and wildlife diseases”.

The Regional Commission proposed that the French and Spanish proposals would go forward for consideration by the International Committee for inclusion in the agenda of the 78th General Session:

8. Selection of a technical item without questionnaire to be included in the agenda of the 23rd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 16 to 19 September 2008

The following technical item, not including a questionnaire to Members, was chosen for the 23rd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe:

“Strategy for controlling bluetongue, including the application of vaccines”

This item will be presented by Prof. Vincenzo Caporale from IZS of Teramo, Italy.

9. Organisation of the 23rd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 16 to 19 September 2008

Dr Kazimieras Lukauskas, Vice-President of the Regional Commission and Delegate of Lithuania, reminded the Regional Commission about his country's invitation to host the 23rd Conference of the Regional Commission in Vilnius, from 16 to 19 September 2008, and reported on the conference venue and organisational details. All information is available on a specially commissioned website: www.oievilnius.lt

10. Presentations of Regional Organisations having an official agreement with the OIE

- European Commission

Dr Alberto Laddomada made a presentation on behalf of Bernard Van Goethem, which was divided in two parts: 1) diseases in Europe and 2) GF-TADs. In apologising for the absence of Dr Van Goethem, Dr Laddomada explained that Dr Van Goethem had to return to Brussels to attend a meeting in the Parliament and was particularly sorry not to have been able to play a part in the meeting of the Regional Commission for Europe.

Initially, Dr Laddomada spoke about the animal health situation in 2007, which was not an easy year, particularly because of the continuing spread of bluetongue. The necessity for a common approach was emphasised as was the uptake of vaccination as an essential
part of the overall control programme. He also emphasised the need for more research and greater coordination and expressed his appreciation for the opportunity for further discussion on bluetongue and in particular the role of vaccination, at the meeting of the Regional Commission in Lithuania.

He spoke about ASF as a matter of very considerable concern, particularly because of the situation in the Caucasus. He reiterated the willingness of the EC to offer its assistance in the control and the elimination of this disease. He referred briefly to the FMD situation in the UK and Cyprus, which was a matter of some concern at the time, but the situation was brought under control with a rapid return to the status quo. He spoke on the AI situation which is currently stable in the EU, but which could deteriorate when least expected. In speaking about rabies and CSF, he said that they should continue to be considered as priorities in Europe, and he referred to the fact that all the technical skills necessary are available to effectively deal with these diseases.

He went on to inform Delegates of a major communication from the EC to the EU Council and Parliament with the new Community Animal Health Strategy (CAHS). This is the first time such a major policy has been presented by the EC. He thanked the CVOs of the EU for the support in the development of this policy document and went on to indicate that an action plan should be submitted by June 2008. In the context of the CAHS, he spoke of the cost of surveillance as an important issue and the fact that the EC Commission has also asked the OIE to undertake studies to assist in determining the costs and benefits of disease surveillance/early warning, as opposed to simply responding to disease outbreaks. The EC is working with EU Member States on animal health priorities and on new funding arrangements.

He went on to speak about the veterinary week in November 2008, in the planning of which the EC will have the support of the OIE and FVE. He indicated that the EC is very keen to continue its work with the OIE on the development of international standards but would also welcome the greater involvement of other countries.

He also mentioned briefly the next International Conference on Animal Welfare to be held in Cairo in October 2008, emphasising the role of the EU as a major sponsor for this important event.

He also spoke about the EC work with a number of countries and stakeholders on the development of Veterinary Services standards, particularly through the programme Better Training for Safer Food (BTSF). Quality of Veterinary Services is another important priority for the EC and it is working closely with the OIE to support the PVS and associated processes. The European Commission sees the PVS procedures as a valuable mechanism for coordination between the OIE, other international organisations, donor agencies and Member Countries. The EU will continue to support the PVS initiative.

In concluding this part of the presentation, Dr Laddomada spoke on the importance of a number of forthcoming seminars.

11. GF-TADs programmes

Dr Alberto Laddomada, reminded Delegates of the role of Dr Van Goethem as president of the Steering Committee of the GF-TADs for the European region. He also made the point that the work of this group is fully supported by the EC. He went on to speak about the role of the GF-TADs as an important tool for disease control in Europe. The EC, which is a significant donor to the work of GF-TADs, is keen to see wider and more effective coordination in the work of GF-TADs. He then spoke about the support of the EC for the GF-TADs programme in the western Balkans and the need for more cooperation in the Caucasus, particularly in the development of the Veterinary Services. He also spoke about EU support for the OIE and FAO programmes including on PVS evaluation, stressing the
importance of the OIE-PVS tool. He also suggested that there was a need for a programme of evaluation of veterinary schools.

He went on to speak about the importance of a number of activities which need specific evaluation under the PVS programme, including animal health surveillance, contingency plans, border controls, and laboratory standards. He suggested that the WHO should be an active participant in the GF-TADs Committee. He also spoke about the need to see partners in GF-TADs exerting increased pressure on governments and parliaments to place greater emphasis on the importance of more effective animal health control throughout the European region. He also spoke about the need to focus on the threat posed to the wider European region on the outbreaks of ASF and CSF in the Balkans and the Caucasus. He then went on to speak about the need to engage with southern neighbouring countries, particularly in North Africa to coordinate work on certain diseases including bluetongue.

Prof. Belev expressed his thanks to the EC for its continuing support for the GF-TADs and the OIE Regional Representation.

12. PVS evaluations update in the region

Dr Caroline Planté, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, reported on the status of the OIE programme for evaluating the performance of Veterinary Services using the OIE-PVS tool. She also described the specific status of the European region. She said that, based on the results of this first diagnosis, the next step would be to analyse any gaps and to prepare priority investment projects, for which the OIE will work in close collaboration with its partner organisations, such as FAO, and with international donors, with the ultimate objective of strengthening Veterinary Services worldwide. She also informed the meeting that a PVS update in the region was available on the Regional website.

13. Other matters

- The emergence of bluetongue and African swine fever in Europe

Dr Caroline Planté, OIE Sub-Regional Representative in Brussels, presented an overview of bluetongue and African swine fever in Europe which have drawn a lot of attention over the last year. Various measures have been taken to limit the spread and control of the diseases. The importance of respecting OIE standards, particularly with regards to notification, monitoring and surveillance activities, was emphasised.

- WAHIS/WAHID – Progress in its implementation by Members in the Region

Dr Laure Weber-Vintzel, OIE Animal Health Information Department, presented an overview of the global implementation of the new OIE World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) and described the status of its implementation in the region. Data on animal health information (six-monthly and annual reports) for 2007 and 2008 were also presented. Dr Weber-Vintzel emphasised the importance of countries submitting animal health information on a regular basis to the OIE. She urged the countries which have not yet submitted the information using the WAHIS system to do so.

The meeting ended at 4.45 p.m.

.../Appendix
Appendix

MEETING
OF THE
OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR EUROPE

Paris, 26 May 2008

Agenda

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7. Proposal of a technical item with questionnaire to be included in the agenda of the 78th General Session of the OIE International Committee to be held in May 2010
8. Selection of a technical item without questionnaire to be included in the agenda of the 23rd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 16 to 19 September 2008
9. Organisation of the 23rd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Europe to be held in Vilnius, Lithuania, from 16 to 19 September 2008
10. Presentations of Regional Organisations having an official agreement with the OIE
   - European Commission
11. GF-TADs programmes
12. PVS evaluations update in the region
13. Other matters
   - The emergence of bluetongue and African swine fever in Europe
   - WAHIS/WAHID – Progress in its implementation by Members in the Region