MEETING OF THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS

Paris, 21 May 2007

The OIE Regional Commission for the Americas met on 21 May 2007 at the Palais Brongniart, Paris, at 2.30 p.m. The meeting was attended by 86 Delegates and observers from 26 Member Countries of the Commission, and representatives from 7 international and regional organisations.

Member Countries of the Commission: Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Surinam, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, Uruguay, Venezuela

International or regional organisations: IICA, PAHO/PANAFTOSA, ICAF, IFAH, PANVET, AVMA, WVA

The meeting was chaired by Dr Jamil Gomes de Souza (Brazil), President of the Regional Commission, assisted by Dr José Angel del Valle Molina (Mexico), Vice-President of the Commission, Dr Emerio F. Serrano Ramírez, Vice-President-nominee of the Commission, and by Dr Víctor Góngora (Belize), Secretary General of the Commission.

The President welcomed the Delegates, observers and representatives of the international and regional organisations. He presented special thanks to the OIE Scientific Commission for animal diseases for its mission to evaluate the foot and mouth disease situation in MERCOSUR countries particularly in Argentina, Brazil and Paraguay.

1. Confirmation of the election of a Vice-President for the Regional Commission

After reviewing the decisions of the 18th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas in Florianopolis, Dr. Emerio Serrano, OIE Delegate of Cuba, was unanimously confirmed as new Vice-President of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas.

2. Adoption of the Agenda

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

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51 IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture
52 PAHO/PANAFTOSA: Pan American Health Organization / Pan American Foot and Mouth Disease Center
53 PANVET: Pan-American Association of Veterinary Sciences
54 American Veterinary Medical Association
3. Administrative Commission update

Dr Carlos Correa Messuti (Uruguay), Vice-President of the Administrative Commission, reported on the matters discussed at Commission meetings. He explained that the Administrative Commission had reviewed the traditional agenda of the General Session and suggested changes to make it more flexible in order to give priority to matters of greatest interest to Member Countries.

As from 2009, the Scientific Commission would have six members, which made it necessary to start nominating candidates. The same would happen with the Aquatic Animals Commission and the Laboratories Commission. Dr Messuti suggested that two members of the Americas form part of each of these Commissions.

He pointed out that more comments were needed from Member Countries on the proposed changes to the Code.

He also emphasised the need for Delegates of the Americas to nominate candidates to receive OIE honorary awards.

In September, the Administrative Commission will review the OIE Basic Texts to reflect the modernisation of the Organisation. He asked for the views of Member Countries on that matter.

Discussions are also under way in the Administrative Commission on other diseases for which Member Countries believe that the OIE should “certify health status”.

Dr Messuti also discussed some aspects of the OIE’s World Animal Health and Welfare Fund.

He commented on a new draft Resolution on the status of the People’s Republic of China in the OIE. That draft would be discussed on Friday during the Administrative Session.

The Delegate of Paraguay asked that Specialist Commission documents in Spanish be sent immediately to give more time to countries to make comments and proposals for changes to the Code.

Paraguay also underlined the problems which some developing countries were experiencing with the high costs involved when applying for recognition of disease free status (7,000 euros).

Dr Alex Thiermann, President of the Code Commission, explained that the Commission’s reports are sent first in English and published on the web. He recalled that Dr Luis Barcos had previously proposed to make an “unofficial” regional translation which countries in the Region could use as a working tool.

Dr Barcos would provide an unofficial regional translation service as part of the Regional Representation’s Action Plan, as well as a mechanism via the Regional Representation’s web page to encourage Member Countries to make comments and proposals on the Code. Some sort of financial support mechanism by Spanish-speaking countries would be examined.

Dr Gastón Funes, Deputy Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department, who is coordinating the OIE Spanish Language Steering Committee, explained that there were two main constraints on the rapid translation of all scientific reports issued by the OIE, namely the budget and the scientific validity of the translation. He said that the OIE will give priority to a project to create a multilingual terminology base, starting with a translation into Spanish. The terminology base would be implemented through an Agreement between the OIE and Spain and in collaboration with other Latin American countries.
4. Outstanding contributions of Member Countries

Dr Brian Evans (Canada), member of the OIE Administrative Commission, reported that outstanding contributions from a number of countries are a matter of concern and urged Member Countries to promptly settle their arrears if any.

5. Preparation of the 19th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas to be held in Cuba from 18 to 22 November 2008

Dr Eimerio Serrano confirmed his country’s invitation to host the 19th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission in Havana, Cuba from 18 to 22 November 2008, and reported on the conference venue and organisational details.

6. Report of the OIE Regional Representation for the Americas (activities and work programme)

Dr Luis O. Barcos, OIE Regional Representative for the Americas, summarised the activities and work programme of the Regional Representation and also presented the plan of activities for 2008.

He discussed the establishment of the new Sub-Regional Office in Panama, together with the annual budget of both the Regional Office in Buenos Aires and the Sub-regional Office in Panama. He also announced that a veterinarian provided by Canada would assist the Regional Office for a two-year period, as from June 2007.

He emphasised the close coordination which the Regional Office maintains with the Executive Board of the Regional Commission for the Americas.

Amongst other activities, he also highlighted the efforts to train new Delegates and the senior staff. He mentioned the cost/benefit study of Veterinary Services, conducted in line with the OIE Central Bureau’s plan for Veterinary Services to have instruments to enable them to request the necessary financial support from their national governments.

Dr Barcos indicated that the Regional Representation was establishing a list of regional experts in the various fields, and asked for the cooperation of Member Countries to nominate candidates.

The representative of Chile suggested that the Work Plan include cooperation with associations of private veterinary professionals and the standardisation of an accreditation system.

Dr Barcos reported on a meeting held recently with the President of PANVET in which joint activities were planned.

The Delegate of the Dominican Republic pointed out that it was important not to neglect diseases historically endemic to the Region such as tuberculosis and brucellosis that posed a risk to human health. The Delegate of Argentina affirmed and supported the Dominican Republic’s remarks and underlined the need to maintain activities on those diseases.

Jamaica emphasised the importance of not only the establishment of international standards by the OIE but also of the training to veterinarians in the Americas on suitable mechanisms and programmes for the practical implementation of those standards in the field.

Dr Peter McKenzie from Canada announced a meeting to be held in Vancouver in June 2007 on aquatic animal health in the Americas, as part of Regional Representation activities.
7. **Website of the OIE Regional Representation for the Americas**

Dr Barcos presented the contents of the new website:

- The interinstitutional agenda of the different organisations. Commenting on this aspect, Dr Barcos said that the various regional organisations needed to work together to prevent duplication. He added that the GF-TADs programme provided the most appropriate forum of coordination and that all organisations in the Region should play an active part to avoid duplication and overlaps.

- The publication of Member Countries’ self-declarations of freedom from different diseases.

8. **Recommendations of the 18th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas (Florianopolis, Brazil, 28 November to 2 December 2006)**

The Recommendations approved at the 18th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas in Florianopolis were presented.

Dr Jamil Gomes da Souza stressed the need to harmonise animal welfare actions in line with OIE standards.

He also discussed the importance of the issue of compensation mechanisms at national level and, wherever possible, at regional level.

The recommendations were approved.

9. **Animal welfare: outcome of the seminar held in Montevideo**

Dr Carlos Correa Mesutti presented a report on the animal welfare seminar held in Montevideo, with European Union and OIE support, which discussed Latin America’s perspective on animal welfare in relation to production systems in the Region. More than 350 people attended the seminar.

10. **Technical item proposed by the Commission for inclusion in the Agenda of the 77th General Session of the OIE International Committee to be held in May 2009**

Dr Barcos reported on the new mechanism adopted for selecting the technical items of General Sessions.

Dr Jamil Gomes da Souza submitted for consideration the items put forward by the Executive Board of the Regional Commission for the Americas.

Following discussions and suggestions, the Commission proposed the technical item “Compensation Mechanisms”.

11. **Technical item proposed by the Commission for inclusion in the Agenda of the 19th OIE Regional Commission for the Americas to be held in Cuba from 18 to 22 November 2008**

The following technical item (with questionnaire) was chosen:

   Biotechnology and its application to Veterinary Science
12. World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS). Progress in its implementation by Member Countries in the Region

Dr Cristina Ramirez from the 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 stage of its implementation in the region. Data on sanitary information (6 monthly and annual reports) for 2005 and 2006 were also presented. Dr Ramirez finally emphasised the importance of countries submitting sanitary information on a regular basis to the OIE.

The Delegate of Ecuador praised the OIE's WAHIS system and commended the support being given by Dr. Ramirez to countries in the Region.

The Representative of the Dominican Republic requested that the next WAHIS workshop be conducted in Spanish to enable better comprehension by Member Countries of the Region.

13. PVS evaluations update

Dr Gastón Funes, Deputy Head of the OIE Regional Activities, presented the aims and objectives of the PVS tool developed by the OIE in collaboration with the Inter American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture (IICA) for the evaluation of Veterinary Services of developing and in transition countries. He also provided an update on the evaluations carried out and the experience gathered so far in the region.

14. Presentations of International or Regional Organisations having an official agreement with the OIE

• PAHO-PANAFTOSA

Dr Albino Belloto presented PAHO-PANAFTOSA, its objectives and structure, its principal actions and the mechanisms used, and the alliances and partnerships with international, regional and sub-regional organisations.

Dr Belloto highlighted the Brazilian Government's support to PANAFTOSA.

Dr Belloto also reported that the main priority work areas of PANAFTOSA were foot and mouth disease, zoonoses and food safety. He briefly discussed the rabies and foot and mouth disease situation in the Americas.

• IICA

Dr Ricardo Molins, IICA's new Director of Agricultural Health and Food Safety, presented the activities which IICA is carrying out in cooperation and coordination with other organisations at regional level and highlighted the training activities.

He emphasised IICA's activities to build the capacity of national Veterinary Services. He stated that IICA's current objective on the application of the PVS was to monitor and support any capacity-building programmes that may arise as a result of OIE evaluations.
15. Other issues

- **OIE Collaborating Centres and Reference Laboratories**

  Dr Serrano reported that Cuba would nominate its Centro de Ingeniería Genética y Biotecnología (Genetic Engineering and Biotechnology Centre of Cuba) for approval as an OIE Collaborating Centre.

  Dr Barcos explained the procedure for the approval of OIE Collaborating Centres and of OIE Reference Laboratories.

  Cuba’s proposal was submitted for consideration and approved by the Commission.

  Argentina informed that the official laboratory of SENASA (Servicio Nacional de Sanidad y Calidad Agroalimentaria) has been proposed for acceptance as an OIE Reference Laboratory for foot and mouth disease. Paraguay and Peru supported the proposal.

The meeting ended at 6.30 p.m
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3. Administrative Commission update
4. Outstanding contributions of Member Countries
5. Organisation of the 19th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas to be held in Cuba from 18 to 22 November 2008
6. Report of the OIE Regional Representation for the Americas (activities and work programme)
7. Website of the OIE Regional Representation for the Americas
8. Recommendations of the 18th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for the Americas held in Florianopolis, Brazil, from 28 November to 2 December 2006
9. Animal welfare: outcome of the seminar held in Montevideo
10. Proposal of a technical item to be included in the Agenda of the 77th General Session of the International Committee to be held in May 2009
11. Technical item proposed by the Commission for inclusion in the Agenda of the 19th OIE Regional Commission for the Americas to be held in Cuba from 18 to 22 November 2008
12. World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) – Progress in its implementation by Member Countries in the Region
13. PVS evaluations update
14. Presentations of Regional Organisations having an official agreement with the OIE: PAHO-PANAFTOSA, IICA.
15. Other issues:
   • OIE Collaborating Centres and Reference Laboratories