Following the recommendations of the 17th Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa, held in Asmara, Eritrea, in February 2007, the OIE undertook to organise this conference, with the conviction that an effective common market authorisation system for veterinary medicinal products within and between countries can best be achieved through a harmonised regional approach and a regional network of laboratories for quality control.

The registration and market authorisation of veterinary medicinal products is an integral and essential component of veterinary service delivery and should and indeed must, therefore, be included and mandated in national legislation to be within the primary responsibility of the public Veterinary Services.

The OIE scientific Conference on Veterinary medicinal products in Africa: ‘Towards the harmonisation and improvement of registration and quality control’ was attended by over 160 participants, mainly from over 35 African countries, including among others OIE Delegates and focal points in charge of registration and quality control of veterinary medicinal products, representatives of international or regional organisations, such as FAO, the World Bank, WAEMU, AU-IBAR, GALVmed, IFAH, and USDA-APHIS, private sector laboratories, OIE Regional Representatives and Collaborating Centres, academics and regulatory veterinarians.

Objectives
The overall objectives of the Conference, listed below, were achieved:
1. To provide an overview and a needs assessment of the current situation in Africa;
2. To promote networking among authorities responsible for the registration, quality control and distribution of veterinary medicinal products;
3. To strengthen collaboration and communication between stakeholders;
4. To strengthen the commitment of users, such as breeder associations, veterinarians and manufacturers, to the regional harmonisation of the regulation and control of the marketing and distribution of veterinary medicinal products;
5. To propose recommendations for the future harmonisation of the regulation, control and registration of veterinary medicinal products in Africa;
6. To strengthen the capacity of Veterinary Services by developing good veterinary governance for the control of veterinary medicinal products.

1- FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
2- WAEMU: West-African Economic and Monetary Union
3- AU-IBAR: African Union – Inter-African Bureau for Animal Resources
4- IFAH: International Federation for Animal Health
5- USDA: United States Department of Agriculture – APHIS: Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service
CONSIDERING

That at least 90% of the OIE-listed diseases of livestock and poultry are present in Africa thereby necessitating veterinary intervention for their prevention and control using vaccination, treatment and other control methods,

That the current registration and distribution practices for veterinary medicinal products in some African countries result in the proliferation of poor quality or counterfeit veterinary medicinal products on the Continent,

That the uncontrolled movement of veterinary medicinal products poses a major threat to animal health, public health and the environment,

That good veterinary governance, which includes the compliance of Veterinary Services with OIE international standards on quality, is instrumental and an essential prerequisite for establishing effective legislation and its efficient enforcement for the registration, distribution and quality control of veterinary medicinal products,

That an effective common market authorisation system for veterinary medicinal products within and between countries can best be achieved through a harmonised regional approach and a regional network of laboratories for quality control,

The major economic advantages associated with the quality and safety of veterinary medicinal products for the development of livestock production, food security and food safety in Africa,

The importance of regional cooperation in the registration, quality control and usage of veterinary medicinal products so as to overcome the inability of some individual countries to effectively institute and maintain such mechanisms because of the high costs for countries working alone,

The existence of international standards regulating the quality assurance, registration and usage of veterinary medicinal products,

The OIE PVS evaluation tool for supporting quality of Veterinary Services,

The importance of controlling residues from veterinary drugs in food products of animal origin,

Programme

The two-and-a-half-day conference focused on the crucial importance of access to good quality veterinary medicinal products for all livestock producers in Africa, and especially for poor farmers whose livelihoods depend on their animals.

A regional approach was advocated to fight organised fraud, which is currently responsible for an alarming level of dangerous, adulterated products being marketed and distributed in Sub-Saharan Africa. A regional approach to the delivery of marketing authorisations for veterinary medicinal products and the capacity to test samples of imported or locally produced products subject to controls was also considered indispensable in view of the high cost of these operations.

To this end, the pilot approach adopted by WAEMU was considered exemplary and could serve as a model to be used as a priority by other regional and sub-regional organisations in Africa.

Harmonisation of national legislations, under the auspices of regional organisations, and the strengthening of controls by the national Veterinary Services in all African countries were considered crucial. Within this context, bringing OIE Members into line with quality standards for the Veterinary Services using the PVS procedure was judged to be the best means of making progress in this direction, if necessary with the support of OIE Collaborating Centres.

The recommendations of the conference were as follows:
The OIE conference on veterinary medical products in Africa recommends:

THAT ALL THE RELEVANT STAKEHOLDERS PARTICIPATE TO IMPROVE THE QUALITY OF THE VETERINARY MEDICINAL PRODUCTS MARKETED IN AFRICA.

THAT OIE MEMBER COUNTRIES:

1. Promote with political decision-makers in their respective countries the importance of good veterinary governance and compliance with OIE international standards on quality of Veterinary Services as an important requirement to facilitate the harmonisation and improvement of registration, distribution and quality control of veterinary medicinal products.

2. By using the appropriate high level human resources upgrade and adapt their veterinary pharmaceutical legislation to enhance the regional harmonisation of registration, quality control, distribution and market authorisation procedures.

3. Promote national, regional and sub-regional testing laboratories to develop and implement quality management systems based on ISO7 standards to enable harmonisation and standardisation of test methods.

4. Promote regional networking and appropriate training among laboratories and authorities responsible for the registration and quality control of veterinary medicinal products to improve excellence and reduce the cost of analysis.

5. Develop national institutional, administrative and financial mechanisms to increase the effectiveness of the quality control process starting from good manufacturing practices to the sale and usage of those products under the supervision of Veterinary Services or of the authority responsible for veterinary medicinal products.

6. Allocate appropriate human and financial resources to Veterinary Services to correctly implement their control responsibilities in the entire national territory in collaboration with the other relevant public authorities.

7. Seek partnerships and collaboration with the private sector including private veterinarians, the pharmaceutical industry, supplier laboratories, pharmacists and livestock associations to help regulate and harmonise the marketing and appropriate and sustainable distribution of safe and efficient veterinary medicinal products.

8. Collaborate with OIE Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives and African Union Regional Technical offices (IBAR and PANVAC8) to seek coordination between Regional Economic Communities such as WAEMU, SADC9 and others to move towards regional harmonisation in particular for the improvement of registration by encouraging mutual recognition as well as distribution and quality control of veterinary medicinal products.

9. Stimulate relevant initiatives from the sub-regional organisations to develop regional initiatives in the veterinary medicinal products area.

10. Promote the control of residues from veterinary drugs in food products of animal origin in agreement with standards developed by the Codex Alimentarius Commission and with support from donors and pharmaceutical industries if necessary.

11. Considering their national situation, to seek measures to find solutions to the problems caused by the administration of diclofenac in livestock.


13. Should, in collaboration with OIE, continue to monitor and align with developments and progress within VICH, and endeavour to adopt and implement VICH guidelines into their regulatory framework for veterinary medicines.

THAT THE OIE:

14. Organise similar conferences in other regions.

15. Using the output of these conferences, continue to develop and update guidelines and tools to enable OIE Member Countries in Africa and worldwide to organise, manage and implement appropriate legislation and mechanisms for the registration, quality assurance and regulation of veterinary medicinal products, preferably using a regional or sub-regional basis, and promote twinning of Laboratories and Collaborating Centres in Africa.

16. Update and reinforce the OIE PVS evaluation tool in the field of veterinary product registration and control.

17. Continue to follow closely the work of VICH and share the results with all the OIE Member Countries.

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7. ISO: International Organization for Standardization
8. PANVAC: Pan-African Veterinary Vaccine Centre
9. SADC: Southern African Development Community
10. VICH: International Cooperation on Harmonization of Technical Requirements for Registration of Veterinary Medicinal Products