

Report of the 1st OIE - AVTA - GALVMED regional conference on the role of veterinary para-professionals in Africa held in Pretoria South Africa, October 2015

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The Africa Veterinary Technicians Association (AVTA) was founded to promote and defend the interest of all Veterinary Para professionals (VPPs), with a special interest in the animal resource industry in Africa. This was after realizing that a gap existed at regional and continental levels in regard to advocacy for the Veterinary Para professions. The membership of the Association is drawn from recognized National Veterinary Para professional Associations in Africa.

The key objective of the landmark Pretoria Conference was to enhance linkages between veterinary surgeons and VPPs for improved service delivery. The conference attracted participants from VPP Associations, Veterinary Authorities (VA), Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSB), AU-IBAR and FAO amongst others. The three day conference was divided into various thematic areas. Following the opening ceremony, there were presentations from key organizations, an overview of OIE standards pertaining to VS and VPPs, and country testimonies by various stakeholders. Discussions also included veterinary oversight, veterinary medicines and vaccines, training of VPPs in Africa, the future of the profession and the perspective of global institutions on the role of VPPs.

The conference recognized several provisions of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code as being relevant to all the deliberations. These included the definition of Veterinary Services, provisions of Section 3 on Quality of Veterinary Services, and provisions of Chapter 3.2 with focus on Article 3.2.12 on Evaluation of VSBs. Also recognized were the recommendations of the third OIE Global Conference on Veterinary Education and the role of VSBs held in Brazil, the 14th conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa held in Arusha, the regional seminar on Animal Health Policies held in Chad, and the outcomes of PVS evaluations conducted in 51 African countries.

At the end, the participants agreed on seven recommendations to the Veterinary Authorities of OIE Member Countries intended to address the shortcomings highlighted in the PVS pathway mission reports, to harmonize the legislative frameworks, to support VPPs to establish independent associations, to include VPPs in decision making and to develop training opportunities for VPPs.

The conference participants further agreed on seven recommendations to the OIE. These included continued support and advocacy for Member Country participation in the PVS Pathway and for OIE to consider development of minimum day-one competences and core training curricula for various categories of VPPs. The conference was unanimously described as very successful.

Keywords: Africa – paraprofessionals – recommendations – OIE – veterinary authorities – linkages.