

Presentation by Major General Peter Davies, Director General of WSPA,
to the second OIE Global Conference on Animal Welfare.

21st October 2008

**Work of Non-Governmental Organisations supporting the
implementation of the OIE standards.**

Thank you, Mr President and Director General for inviting me to address briefly this Conference. May I say how inspirational I found your opening address, Mr President.

Distinguished delegates this morning's remaining presentations are all by non-governmental organisations. I shall speak on the work of my organisation – the World Society for the Protection of Animals. WSPA is truly a global alliance of animal welfare organisations with over 950 member organisations from over 150 countries. This means that we are extremely well placed, via our 15 international offices and our widespread Member Societies, to support the global implementation of OIE animal welfare standards, although we may sometimes be pressing for even higher standards in some areas.

In 2007 we entered into a formal agreement with the OIE which was a most significant step in ensuring the future co-operation between our two organisations. We believe, like earlier speakers, that progress in animal welfare will be made through evolution and not revolution and such co-operation is important in achieving this progress.

There is more than one way in which the member countries of OIE can be encouraged in their efforts to implement and enforce animal welfare standards.

In many developing countries there is no legal basis on which to build a structure capable of implementing the OIE standard on slaughter, for example. In our opinion there has to be a groundwork laid down of basic animal welfare principles.

To this end WSPA and the major animal welfare organisations around the world have promoted the principle of a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare (UDAW). How animals are treated matters both to the animals and to the people who care for them. Nearly half the world's population is involved in agriculture, and livestock are important for food, for labour and for income. Yet there is currently no global recognition of the importance of animal welfare. A global, formal recognition of UDAW will encourage governments and intergovernmental agencies worldwide to take actions that will benefit animals, people and the environment.

The intention is for such a Declaration to be adopted by the United Nations. To achieve this, the support of governments, both from developing and developed countries, is essential. Equally essential is to gain the active support of the veterinary profession, amongst others. It gives me great pleasure to know that WSPA already has the support of the World Veterinary Association (WVA), the Commonwealth Veterinary Association (CVA) and the Federation of Veterinarians of Europe (FVE) and many national veterinary associations. In addition I was delighted to be told by Dr Abdul Rahman, representing both the OIE and WSPA, that the Islamic Conference on Animal Welfare, held in Cairo on 18/19 October has formally endorsed the UDAW initiative. In May 2007 the International Committee of the OIE, at its General Session, adopted a resolution of support for the principle of a Universal

Declaration on Animal Welfare. This was a major step forward as it meant that the member countries of the OIE recognised that a UDAW would be complementary to the OIE role in setting international animal welfare standards and would help countries to take the first steps in establishing an animal welfare legal basis on which other legislation, including that which would allow OIE standards to be implemented, to be introduced. It would also, I believe, form a platform from which a Global Treaty, identified by Dr Sara Babcock in her presentation yesterday, could be progressed. We now look forward to identifying more specific collaborative opportunities where the OIE can actively support the progression of the Declaration towards the United Nations General Assembly.

As I indicated earlier, improving animal welfare through legislation and practice is a step by step process. It can be frustrating for the international animal welfare movement to accept that sometimes progress can be very slow. It is encouraging, however, to see that progress is steadily being made and that animals are indeed benefiting.

In addition to our support for, and promotion of, a Universal Declaration on Animal Welfare, we also mobilise our member organisations around the world to bring pressure on governments to recognise the OIE standards and to draw up plans for their implementation.

This does not necessarily mean that a country has to rush into legislation. In fact legislation which is not wanted and is not enforced is worse than no legislation at all. Other basic steps can be taken and one of these steps is through education and training. For example, the OIE standard on slaughter for food lays down detailed criteria for the handling, stunning

and slaughter of animals in slaughterhouses. Good animal handling before slaughter is not only good animal welfare but it also makes economic sense. Most injuries and bruising which cause the animal to suffer and the carcase to be damaged can be avoided. The loss of carcase value that goes with such damage will also be avoided. Even in places where pre-slaughter stunning cannot be introduced for religious reasons the slaughtermen should be skilled in the procedure for humane slaughter. There is no excuse for a blunt knife or ignorance of the anatomy of the animal's neck and the exact position of the major veins and arteries. This was covered in greater detail by Dr Mohammed Chaudry and Dr Hassan Aidaros yesterday.

Training schemes for slaughtermen and others who work in slaughterhouses should be the first step in implementing this OIE standard. WSPA and many of our member organisations are more than willing to help governments set up training schemes. We are also willing to arrange for experts to visit countries and to discuss with governments and those involved in the slaughter industry the best way to bring about improvements and to make the slaughter of animals for food more humane. Later on today, Dr.Kolesar, one of the experts in WSPA, will talk on WSPA's current work in China and Brazil. Efforts which have had, and will continue to have, positive results.

WSPA recognises that OIE's task is to set international standards for the transport of animals by road and by sea and not to question the reasons why animals are being transported.

However we believe that long distance transport of animals – particularly for slaughter – causes great stress to animals and, in many cases, much suffering and loss of life. The traditional reasons for transporting animals long distances for slaughter is almost entirely economic. In our opinion,

economic arguments cannot justify the suffering caused and, indeed, an economic benefit case can be made for the alternative of transporting chilled or frozen carcases, which makes sense not only in animal welfare terms but by also reducing the likelihood of disease occurring and, subsequently, being spread.

Many of you will know that earlier this year a coalition of WSPA and the major international animal welfare organisations launched a campaign which argued against the cruel and avoidable long distance transportation of animals for slaughter. This campaign has been recognised internationally and in May at the OIE General Session WSPA made available to all CVOs a book which provided the first comprehensive coverage of the science, welfare problems and incidence of long distance transport. We believe that this campaign has made people, including those in government, think seriously about this problem and in some cases to take steps to reduce or stop the live trade. I was delighted to hear the forward thinking and robust views on this subject by President O'Neil yesterday.

WSPA firmly believes that the OIE's initiative in undertaking the task of designing international animal welfare standards can only result in major improvements to the way that animals are treated and lead to better animal welfare around the world. Standards on their own are only a first step. They must be implemented and we will play our part, in collaboration with, and in support of, the OIE in achieving this. Together, and with mutual respect, we can surely make a difference.