

Speech by Dr Bernard Vallat, Director General of the OIE

To the 34th Session of the Codex Alimentarius Commission

Geneva, 6 July 2011

Chairperson, Vice-Chairs, Madame Secretary, Ministers and Delegates, Representatives of International and Regional Organisations, Distinguished participants.

In opening I would like to thank the FAO, WHO and the Secretariat of the Codex Alimentarius Commission for giving me this opportunity to address you on behalf of the Members of the World Organisation for Animal Health (the OIE). I also thank Karen Hulebak for having accepted the invitation to address our World Assembly of Delegates in May.

For more information, please see the detailed report provided at document CAC/34 INF/2.

The OIE held its 79th General Session on 23-27 May 2011. At this Session, the OIE adopted revisions to the Basic Texts, including amendments to the General Rules. These amendments provide for the adoption of standards on the basis of consensus and, if consensus cannot be obtained, on the basis of a two-thirds majority vote. They also contain provisions addressing potential conflict of interest for members of Specialist Commissions, Working Groups, *ad hoc* Groups, OIE Reference Centres and other experts; and provisions concerning the protection of legitimate confidentiality.

In the past 12 months, the OIE has participated in several meetings of Codex and its Committees and we welcome the participation of Codex staff and experts in OIE meetings, notably, the OIE Working Group on Animal Production Food Safety.

Ongoing collaboration between Codex and OIE is essential given current understanding of the contribution of animal health at the production level to the sanitary safety of the food chain 'from farm to fork'. The OIE and Codex should continue to strengthen this collaboration to ensure that our standards are consistent and complementary and to avoid gaps, contradictions and duplication.

The OIE continues to work to strengthen the capacities of Members to meet the OIE and WTO standards relevant to animal health and zoonotic diseases, including by following the 'OIE PVS Pathway'. This is a pathway for strengthening veterinary services and aquatic animal health services by using the OIE Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services, and related activities, including missions for strengthening veterinary legislation. In this regard, the OIE encourages Codex to take into account both the OIE standards and the PVS Pathway procedures in developing recommendations on the requirements for national inspection services for food of animal origin, which are currently being addressed by CCFICS. The role of veterinary services in food safety is addressed by OIE standards and the OIE PVS Tool and the OIE's experience in the evaluation of more than 110 Members provides a valuable input to this work.

At the 33rd Session of the Codex Commission, I reiterated the OIE's wish to continue strengthening the relationship with Codex, including through the proposed joint development by the OIE and Codex of standards relevant to safe foods of animal origin, where appropriate. I note that the Codex Secretariat distributed a circular letter to national Codex Contact Points in 2010 on this topic and requested that Members provide comments to inform discussion at the 27th Session of the Codex Committee on General Principles in 2012. The OIE looks forward to further discussion and will continue to work with the Codex Secretariat on this matter.

As I have mentioned in previous presentations to this Commission, the growth of private standards in international trade continues to be of concern to OIE Members, particularly developing countries. At the request of Members, the OIE is establishing mechanisms for coordination with

global private standard setting bodies to help gain an understanding of the implications of private standards and to encourage these bodies to avoid conflicts with official standards - including, for example, by making specific reference to the OIE and Codex standards, as appropriate. As part of this collaboration, the OIE is signing an official agreement with the Global Food Safety Initiative this year. The OIE continues to explore opportunities for closer collaboration.

The OIE convened an expert *ad hoc* Group on Zoonotic Parasites, which held its first meeting in October 2010. As the scope of the Group's work is broader than food safety, the OIE invited participation from the WHO and FAO rather than from Codex. The Group updated the OIE *Terrestrial Code* chapter on trichinellosis and developed recommendations on *Echinococcus granulosus*, a zoonotic parasite that is not associated with food but whose transmission can be prevented using good hygiene measures. The revised *Code* Chapters on trichinellosis and new recommendations on *Echinococcus granulosus* were sent to OIE Members for comment in March 2011.

The OIE is pleased to accept the invitation to attend a meeting of the Codex Physical Working Group on 'Guidelines for Control of Specific Zoonotic Parasites in Meat: *Trichinella spiralis* and *Cysticercus bovis*' in July 2011. This should help to ensure a co-ordinated approach between Codex and the OIE in this area of work, in which OIE is developing new standards on animal production food safety.

Chairperson, in closing may I assure you of my strong commitment, on behalf of 178 OIE Members, to continuing the established close relationship with Codex. I believe that our current close and effective working relationship reflects the commitment on the part of the Secretariats and, most importantly, the Members of the two organisations. However, in this era of global 'One Health', I believe that it is possible for us to extend this collaboration to further benefit Members of both organisations. The OIE is ready to address this challenge with you.

Thank you for your attention.