

Dear President,

Your Excellencies Ministers,

Director General,

Chief Veterinary Officers and Delegates of the World Animal Health Organisation (the OIE),

I was deeply honoured when Dr. Vallat asked me to serve as a Goodwill Ambassador for the OIE last year. I accepted because I believe in the objectives of the OIE and in the importance of the work undertaken by its delegates. I admire the OIE's core values and all your endeavours. And I am thrilled and truly inspired to be here with you all today at the opening of the OIE General Session. I know how much this great organization contributes to the health and well-being of animals around the world and therefore to mankind.

Most people do not realize the essential role that the OIE plays at the critical intersection of human and animal health. There are so many issues we are confronting on our continuously changing planet. We are all witnesses to the consequences of globalisation and climate change and as together we face the challenge of ensuring that the Earth continues to produce the food necessary to sustain its increasing population.

The scope and the impact of the work that you all do is massive. As Dr. Vallat has noted, 75 percent of emerging diseases have their origin in animals. And once again, to say I am honored to be here is really a statement of the deepest respect and regard that I have for the OIE, knowing that at this very moment, OIE experts are in the field, on the frontlines of the effort to prevent a potentially cataclysmic outbreak of avian flu. Other OIE experts are working to protect us from another outbreak of mad cow disease, defending us from the threat of bioterrorism and taking action to ensure the safety and sustainability of our food supply.

I have seen the importance and the impact of your work in countries around the world in my travels as a UN Messenger of Peace focused on hunger and extreme poverty; as a member of the International Olympic Committee and as President of the International Equestrian Federation. That impact goes well beyond the health issues that I have touched on. By providing technical support to countries in need, and by promoting transparency and the dissemination of veterinary research, the OIE is sharing valuable knowledge on a global scale. By taking a science-based approach to animal welfare and publishing health standards for trade in animals and animal products, the OIE serves as the most credible and influential advocate for the humane treatment of animals. By promoting veterinary education and the involvement of para-professionals, the OIE is raising the standard for veterinary care worldwide.

And as someone who has spent the better part of my adult life working against hunger, I deeply appreciate the connection between your work and the global food supply. The traditional livestock production systems that the OIE advocates, with progressive disease control and effective vaccination campaigns, can avoid the needless slaughter of infected animals. The mass killing of animals in response to outbreaks of preventable diseases is disturbing on many levels, but for those of us who have seen the face of hunger in young children, it is an unconscionable

waste of animal protein. The challenges of globalization and urbanization, of climate change, and of persistent hunger and poverty are daunting. Experts tell us we will need to double food production by 2050 to meet human needs and end the hunger that still afflicts 925 million people. Your efforts to safeguard animal health and to encourage safe, sustainable food supplies will help us close that food gap. As a mother, I am particularly grateful for your work to reverse the dangerous trend toward antimicrobial resistance. The U.S. Food and Drug Administration has calculated that 80 percent of the antibiotics used in the United States are used on animals. The overuse of antibiotics is a serious and growing threat to human and animal health.

As a population, we need to be able to harness the products of the land and sea, but we need to be able to trade these products too. In doing so, we must ensure that we are protected from the ravages of disease in both the human and animal populations.

Whatever action is taken to feed our populations and to keep them safe must be sustainable. And that action must be taken TOGETHER.

Sustainability does not mean introducing an approach that is replicated again and again without further improvement. Sustainability is most powerful when it creates a “mindset”, a mindset that involves exploring problems from every angle and seeking new approaches to resolving them - instead of simply relying on old habits. Working together sustainably means forming successful partnerships with aims that are clear to everyone.

The public-private partnership between the OIE and the FEI – the world governing body of equestrian sport – is an example of a novel approach.

Together the OIE and FEI are creating a system to differentiate health requirements for the temporary movement of healthy sport horses – which are under a high degree of veterinary supervision – from those for other types of horses.

A thriving economy, especially a rural economy, is based on trade and is a means to a nation’s stability. We must support local economies by promoting safe and sustainable trade among nations.

High-level partnerships must be supported by governments and their national industries, or they never work. This is precisely what the FEI intends to achieve by building a solid foundation at the national level. This foundation, built on a consistent application of controls and biosecurity, allows the local equine industry to flourish and develop and, at the same time, answers the concerns of governments.

Beyond sustainable solutions and economic growth, the fate of our world relies ultimately on good leadership. I am aware that today, I am in an auditorium full of leaders and I cannot emphasise enough that your contribution is crucial.

All of you here today believe in human potential. You develop skills in others and understand the value of empowerment. You are open to a variety of possible solutions and make commitments to change, creating a culture of self-examination, transparency and teamwork. You constantly ask questions and never lose your determination to succeed.

Good leadership is about understanding what must be achieved and finding sustainable ways of reaching those goals. It is about having the courage to make bold decisions if they are appropriate for achieving objectives set.

I have the deepest faith in the leadership that the OIE gives us and I fully support its approach to sustainability. And most of all, I am truly happy to represent the OIE because it clearly understands the logic of bringing people together with a just approach that is based on science.

I do promise as your Goodwill Ambassador to dedicate all my energy and means to letting people know about the important work you all do — and it is my hope that by sharing that knowledge about the OIE, I will in the smallest of ways help you all to be more effective.

Thank you all so much for allowing me to speak to you today, it has truly been a great honor. We live in one world, in one system that has to sustain us. Animal health and welfare are vital to that system.

The problems that the OIE confronts are many and varied, but they are no match for the brainpower and commitment of this organization, especially when those attributes are amplified by global cooperation.

I hope that in this General Session you will find a way to harnessing the strength of innovation together, by having the courage to take new and just decisions, and that you will be granted the clarity to decide on the best approaches and principles together, in order to meet our challenges and achieve sustainability in all its forms.

And I know that in doing so you will be protecting our citizens and supporting prosperity, giving peace a foundation, and creating a sustainable future for our world.

I wish you all a stimulating, productive and successful 81st General Assembly.