



Official Closing Ceremony of the World Veterinary Congress

Speech by the Director General of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE)

Cape Town, 14 October 2011

Honourable President of the World Veterinary Association and your Committee,
President of the organising Committee
National and Regional Authorities
OIE national Delegates,
Fellow veterinarians,
Honourable Participants,

Thank you for inviting me to participate, on behalf of OIE Member Countries, in the Closing Session of this very important event.

As you know, our 178 Member Countries have given us a mandate to improve animal health and welfare worldwide.

How can this be achieved? We need:

- To collect information from all our Member Countries on their animal disease situation both in domestic animals and in wildlife and to inform all countries on a daily basis;
- To collect updated scientific information on disease prevention and control methods, thanks to our global network of 250 Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres; to provide this information to our Member Countries; and then to use it as the basis for harmonised guidelines and standards that are universally applicable and acceptable to all for disease control worldwide;

- To guarantee the sanitary safety of international trade of animals and animal products through the publication of standards recognised by the World Trade Organization;
- To ensure international solidarity in favour of countries still infected by transboundary diseases, thereby contributing to the alleviation of poverty while protecting countries already free of diseases. Support of this kind is a win-win situation. We know that close to 1 billion people worldwide need animals for their survival.

The achievement of these very ambitious objectives mainly depends on good governance of the Veterinary Services, combining both the public and private components of veterinary activities. Good governance includes appropriate national legislation that makes provision for the rules governing legal recognition of the mandate of veterinarians, the scope of their activities and the powers they are given to manage disease outbreaks.

This legislation must respect international standards and must make it compulsory for governments to provide the necessary budget to implement and verify compliance with the rules provided for in the legislation.

The conditions governing collaboration between the official Veterinary Services, veterinary practitioners, farmers and others stakeholders should also be included in the legislation. We call this the “public-private alliance”. This collaboration is a key factor in improving animal health worldwide. These alliances should ensure that the national animal health system, based on collaboration between official veterinarians, private vets and farmers or animal owners, can provide early detection, rapid response and transparency when faced with biological threats, whether naturally or intentionally occurring or deliberate.

An efficient national health system should clearly be considered a global public good, defined as an activity that is beneficial to all people and all future generations.

The activities of the veterinary profession along with animal health systems are therefore also a global public good. This is very important for the veterinary profession. Indeed, the OIE supports the profession because it is the pillar of the global, regional, national and local activities promoted by our organisation.

We must realise that the marketing of the veterinary profession is based on its recognition by all citizens, since it is they who elect the policy makers who will be preparing legislation and the budgets. It is therefore crucial for us to demonstrate that veterinarians are not only good animal doctors, but also key players in the field of animal protein production, public health, including food safety and prevention of human diseases, and participants in the alleviation of poverty worldwide. These elements are very important for the marketing of the profession. However, greater investment is needed in the field of communication and the OIE would be pleased to collaborate with the WVA in this field, as well in other activities that are also important for ensuring the excellence of veterinarians worldwide, such as the key

components of veterinary education and the effective organisation of veterinary quality and ethics through efficient Veterinary Statutory Bodies in all countries.

The 250th anniversary of the veterinary profession is an excellent occasion to harmonise the global communication policies of veterinarians, and the OIE has participated in World Veterinary Year with this objective in mind.

I would like to show you an example of some of the practical achievements made in this respect with the highly appreciated support of the European Union.

Together, we have produced 7 video clips, available in 23 languages. I have selected 3 of them to present to you today.

They can all be downloaded from the OIE and EU websites and are freely available for public use worldwide.

I warmly encourage you to use them as a means of promoting the veterinary profession in your country, as a global public good.

Thank you for your attention.

Bernard Vallat