



Organización Mundial
de Sanidad Animal
Fundada como OIE

26th Conference of the
Regional Commission for the Americas
held by videoconference
on 8 – 9 November, 2022.

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

Following an internal discussion, the Regional Commission for the Americas confirmed, during the 89th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH, founded as OIE), that it was willing to keep its 26th Conference in virtual format considering the still delicate situation in the Region in terms of post-pandemic recovery. In this regard, the 26th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas was held on 8 and 9 November, at 3 p.m. (Paris time), by videoconference (via Zoom).

113 participants attended the conference, including WOAH Delegates and/or nominees from 29 Members, including Dr. Hugo Idoyaga Benítez, President of the World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Paraguay. Official agents from 13 regional and international organisations, as well as representatives of the private sector and private veterinary organisations from the Region were also present as observers.

Members of WOAH Regional Commission for the Americas: Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Chile, Dominican Republic, Ecuador, El Salvador, France, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Saint Lucia, Suriname, Trinidad and Tobago, United States of America, and Uruguay.

International/ Regional Organisations: ALA¹, CaribVET², CARICOM-CAHFSA³, CVP⁴, FAO⁵, FARM⁶, FEI⁷, IICA⁸, ICFAW⁹, OIRSA¹⁰, OPS/OMS PANAFTOSA¹¹, PANVET¹², and SG-CAN¹³

Also present, on behalf of WOAH, Dr Montserrat Arroyo, Deputy Director General "International Standards and Science", Dr Neo Mapitse, Head of the Regional Activities Department, Dr Luis Barcos, Regional Representative for the Americas, and Dr. Catya Martinez, Sub-Regional Representative for Central America. In addition, Members of the technical and administrative staff of both WOAH Headquarters and regional offices in the Americas also took part in the Conference.

¹ Latin American Poultry Association

² Caribbean Animal Health Network

³ Caribbean Community - Caribbean Agriculture Health and Food Safety Agency

⁴ Southern Cone Standing Veterinary Committee

⁵ Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

⁶ Federation of Mercosur Rural Associations

⁷ International Equestrian Federation

⁸ Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

⁹ International Coalition of Animal Welfare

¹⁰ International Regional Organization of Plant and Animal Health

¹¹ Pan American Centre for Foot-and-Mouth Disease PAHO/WHO

¹² Pan American Veterinary Sciences Association

¹³ Andean Community General Secretariat

TUESDAY 8 NOVEMBER 2022

Opening ceremony

The following authorities gave a welcome message to the participants:

- Dr Luis Barcos, Regional Representative for the Americas
- Dr Wilmer Juárez Juárez, President of the Regional Commission for the Americas and Delegate of Nicaragua
- Dr Hugo Idoyaga Benítez, President of the World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Paraguay
- Dr Monserrat Arroyo, Deputy Director General "International Standards and Science".
- Dr Monique Eloit, WOAHA Director General (through a video)

WOAH: Improving animal health globally to ensure a better future for all

Dr Monserrat Arroyo, Deputy Director General "International Standards and Science", presented, on behalf of Dr Monique Eloit, WOAHA Director General, a quick overview of the work done by the Organisation to support its Members in their daily work as well as to achieve future global animal health objectives.

She began by reminding the participants on the overarching mission of the Organisation which is to ensure animal health worldwide due to its direct impact on the livelihoods of millions of families as well as on food security and food safety, without forgetting the impact on human health when animal diseases are transmissible to humans.

She mentioned that, to support its Members in facing obvious challenges such as transboundary and emerging diseases, zoonosis and the control of foodborne diseases as well as new global challenges such as climate and socioeconomic changes, new consumption patterns, among other challenges that will require the Veterinary Services to adapt, the Organisation was currently working on several lines, including the core activities of its mandate such as the collection of data and information on animal diseases and standard setting.

She also mentioned the development of global strategies and ambitious capacity building programs. In addition, she stressed that WOAHA was ready to update its strategies and revise its standards, if necessary, to ensure better support to its Members in facing future challenges. She also acknowledged the need and willingness of the Organisation to integrate other areas of expertise so that animal health is addressed in a more holistic way.

Among the main conclusions of Dr Arroyo's presentation, the following can be highlighted:

- It is key for WOAHA and its Members to take a stance on today's major global challenges to ensure recognition of the Organisation beyond the Veterinary Services sector and to avoid being limited to the field of livestock and trade. We need to be very active in political fora to ensure that our voice is heard and considered in the ongoing negotiations on the future global health governance so that we have a key place within the said governance.
- The first area of the Organisation's commitment is strictly related to animal health and is covered through global strategies such as: Foot and mouth disease (FMD); PPR, Rabies, African Swine fever (ASF). Within these areas, FMD, PPR and ASF are addressed through the GF-TADs.

- Over the years, the Organisation has also invested in new areas of interest for Veterinary Services, mainly to respond to new challenges, such as animal welfare, antimicrobial resistance, biological threat reduction, capacity building, including distance learning, and also aquatic animal and wildlife health.
- While the prevention of animal diseases is key, not only is it a matter of avoiding contagion to humans, but also a matter of acting in the animal sector to limit the factors that favour emergence.
- A key element to advocate and promote the importance of the National Veterinary Services and thus attract more interest from policy makers and politicians in general is to hold briefing meetings at the level of national Ministers of Agriculture and Parliamentarians linking the production and animal health sector as well as decision makers with the economic and budgetary planning field.
- WOAHA's PVS Pathway and the Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBADS) Programme are suitable tools to demonstrate the value as well as the economic and social impact of the actions of Veterinary Services.
- Collaboration with International and Regional Organisations as well as working through Public-Private Partnerships are also key in advocating and promoting the importance of Veterinary Services.
- There is a need to develop communication strategies and take better advantage of social networks in order to make information about the activities of WOAHA as well as the Veterinary Services more accessible to society in general, to the production sector and to the universities. In this regard, conveying the positive impact that WOAHA and the Veterinary Services represent for animal health and welfare, and human health and the environment, in line with the "One Health" concept is key.

Report of activities of the Regional Commission for the Americas

Dr. Juárez Juárez outlined the activities of the Bureau of the Regional Commission, highlighting, among others, the meeting held in September 2022 with the Council Members of the Americas. At that meeting, priority topics for the region were proposed, as well as actions to promote a more active participation of Members from the Americas region in the Organisation's activities. The report of the meeting was distributed to the Members in a timely manner.

Among the points discussed was the importance for the Bureau members to act as a bridge with the rest of the Members of the Region to define priorities and roadmaps, as well as to identify priority and strategic issues to be proposed to WOAHA.

Some of the priority areas defined to be worked on at regional level correspond to WOAHA work plan in general, Standards under commenting period or the proposals for new standards, the work plan of the Specialist Commissions, animal welfare priorities, strategic actions on wildlife and aquatic animal health, among other relevant topics that may be proposed by a Member.

WOAHA Regional Representation for the Americas, in collaboration with the Sub-Regional Representation for Central America will be responsible for facilitating and implementing the logistical arrangements for the organisation of any meeting that Members deem necessary to enable inter-regional coordination.

Regarding training needs, the Regional Representation will coordinate, together with the Bureau of the Regional Commission, a support program for newly appointed Delegates. A practical approach will be sought to achieve an interaction and follow-up in line with the training for new Delegates developed by WOAHA Headquarters, including the online training modules. In addition, better follow-up will be sought with National Focal Points to ensure effective interaction with their Delegates.

Dr. Juárez Juárez highlighted the importance of further strengthening communication between the Headquarters, the Council, the Delegates and the Focal Points.

Finally, participants were consulted through a survey on topics relevant to the region. The contribution of animal health and welfare as well as of Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR) to a sustainable food production were identified as priorities of high interest, followed by strategic activities in Animal Welfare, participation in WOAAH Standards setting process, electronic certification, strategic activities in aquatic animal health, and the need for a special PVS Pathway approach for countries with limited resources.

Active involvement of the Members of the Americas in WOAAH activities

Dr. Idoyaga Benitez stressed the strategic advantages presented in the new *Regional Follow-up Approach* to facilitate the work of the Members of the Bureau and ensure that they can fulfil their role as representatives of the Members of the Region and act as a bridge between WOAAH and the Region.

He emphasised that the representatives of the Bureau will play a role of leadership in their interaction with the Members they represent, in order to identify regional priority and strategic issues and draw roadmaps that respond to the needs of the Region.

To this end, he stressed that it is the members of the Bureau who will call for the organisation of meetings involving the Delegates and National Focal Points of the Region. These meetings will be aimed at discussing and compiling proposals for each of the strategic topics previously defined as priorities in the Region. He also highlighted the coordination task to be carried out by the Regional Representation in collaboration with the Sub-Regional Representation to facilitate and provide logistical support for the execution of the aforementioned meetings.

A survey was conducted among the participants, which confirmed that there is interest in actively participating in WOAAH's activities, including active participation in the Standards development process.

Summary of the animal health situation in Members in the Region during 2021 and 2022

Dr Lina Awada, Veterinary Epidemiologist of the Data Integration Department of WOAAH, focused her presentation on four relevant points, including an update on the implementation of the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS), cases of highly pathogenic avian influenza (HPAI) virus infection, information on cases of African Swine Fever virus infection and notification of aquatic animal diseases.

As for the new WAHIS platform, she announced the publication, in September, of the updated Immediate Notification and follow-up module , and announced the availability of an online support desktop and training materials¹⁴ for users.

Regarding the cases of HPAI infection, she pointed out that the epidemic wave in the Americas has a very high incidence in wild birds and domestic poultry compared to previous years. This is related to the potential to spread southwards through the flyways of migratory wild birds, which was demonstrated by its timely detection in Colombia. She highlighted the concern about the variable level of surveillance and case reporting activities in wild birds, as the current strain is better adapted to wild birds.

¹⁴ Available at <https://wahis-support.woah.org/>

With regard to the cases of ASF that occurred in Haiti and the Dominican Republic, she commented that these events confirmed the virus' ability to evade prevention and control measures, and that this has increased the risk of further spread to the rest of the Region. She also stressed the importance of surveillance of the disease in wildlife, as well as simulation exercises as an appropriate preparedness measure.

Regarding aquatic animal disease reporting, she indicated that there is a need to improve surveillance and reporting capabilities, highlighting the decrease in the submission of six monthly reports.

A survey was conducted where the majority of respondents indicated that *the update in the WAHIS interface facilitated the presentation of reports*. It was also indicated, albeit with a smaller number of responses, that *it made it easier to access stored information*. A lower percentage of respondents indicated that *there was no improvement*.

A second survey focused on the main obstacles to the implementation of wildlife surveillance for diseases such as HPAI or ASF. In this case, *lack of financial and human resources* were identified as the main constraints, followed by *administrative constraints*, such as the management of wildlife issues by different national authorities.

A third survey showed that most Members are taking steps to address gaps in aquatic animal disease surveillance.

African Swine Fever Main challenges for its eradication in Dominican Republic and Haiti

Dr. Angela Morillo, Director of Animal Health of the Dominican Republic and Dr. Haïm Joseph Corvil, Delegate of Haiti, presented a summary of the main challenges encountered in their countries to implement actions for the control and eradication of African Swine Fever.

Dr. Morillo emphasised the need to establish a surveillance and early detection system for the disease. In addition, she pointed out the need for human resources to strengthen the structure of the control points for the mobilisation of pigs at the national level. Finally, she added that it is necessary to work on an awareness campaign for backyard producers to implement the biosecurity concept in their farms so to prevent the spread of the disease and ensure the elimination of outbreaks.

Dr. Corvil highlighted the great social and political crisis that the country is undergoing as the greatest limitation, in addition to the difficulty in travelling to the production areas. She also highlighted the lack of professionals and the scarcity of financial resources. She added that the need for financial resources is a major aggravating factor, since producers require compensation to accept the disposal of animals.

In response to the electronic survey on what concrete actions could be taken by Members and GF-TADs to support the control and eradication of ASF in the Dominican Republic and Haiti, the majority highlighted the need to *strengthen the Veterinary Services*, followed by the need to *raise awareness and commitment at the political level*. The need to *manage compensation mechanisms* as well as the availability of *rapid diagnostic tests in the field* was considered.

Project for the harmonization of health requirements and implementation of a common protocol and health certificate for temporary movements of high health, high performance horses (HHP) in South America.

Dr. Göran Akerström, Veterinary Director of the International Equestrian Federation (FEI) and Dr. Mauro Meske, WOAHP Status Department Officer, presented the characteristics of the Project, the team of consultants selected for its execution, the work stages and the needs to reach the goals.

They emphasised that the two-year project seeks to harmonise the health requirements for the temporary movement of HHP horses in South America and to achieve a common protocol and health certificate based on the Terrestrial Code. The teams of consultants, formed by Dr. Rita Rocca, Dr. Liliana Revollo Pizarro and Dr. Rosa Guerrero Céspedes, will work in a coordinated and joint manner, focusing on the Mercosur and Andean Community countries.

They added that the completion of this project will require the collaboration of key government stakeholders such as the Veterinary Services and Customs, as well as the equine industry sector.

This was followed by the results of a survey conducted on the capabilities of the National Reference Laboratories for the diagnosis of six equine diseases included in the Certificates for HHP Horses, which include *Glanders*, *African Horse Sickness*, *Equine Influenza*, *Equine Infectious Anemia*, *Equine Pyroplasmiasis* and *Venezuelan Equine Encephalomyelitis (EEV)*.

25 Members from the Americas responded to the survey, which revealed that there are varying diagnostic capabilities, coupled with limited use of inter-laboratory capacity tests.

It was also highlighted that for the consultation period (2018 to 2021) no proficiency testing for EEV was conducted, in addition to the limited availability of WOAHP Reference Laboratories for several of the relevant diseases mentioned to facilitate the temporary movement of equine HHP.

As a result, it is proposed to organise more inter-laboratory proficiency testing, in addition to the need for Member involvement in the nomination of potential future WOAHP Reference Laboratories for these priority diseases.

In the electronic survey on the most relevant challenges to improve the international movement of HHP horses, the majority of responses pointed to the *lack of a harmonised veterinary protocol and certificate between countries*, followed by the *lack of diagnostic capabilities*, the *differences regarding health status in countries* and the *lack of coordination between national agencies*.

The next survey on digital certification capabilities for the movement of horses, including digital health or Customs certificates as well as mobile applications for their identification, revealed that about one third of the countries already have such capabilities. In addition, slightly less than one third are in the process of implementation.

The third survey revealed that the main limitation for applying as a WOAHP Reference Laboratory is resource availability. In contrast, there were some Members who were interested in considering such application.

Development of Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) activities at regional and global levels.

Dr. Jack Shere, Chairman of the GF-TADs Regional Steering Committee for the Americas, took part in the meeting through a video where he pointed out that he will seek to work more closely with GF-TADs members to tackle transboundary animal diseases that threaten food sources, livelihoods and economies in the region.

He expressed full support for activities to strengthen public-private partnerships within the framework of the GF-TADs, particularly by incorporating representatives of meat processing industries, food producers and veterinary pharmaceutical companies, with whom consensus should be reached to implement robust and more effective strategies for epidemiological surveillance, biosecurity, preparedness and outbreak response.

Finally, he called for reflection on whether countries are really prepared for an outbreak of African Swine Fever or any other transboundary disease.

Dr. Alexandre Fediaevsky, GF-TADs Regional Coordinator at WOA's Regional Activities Department, presented the elements that make up the Global Strategy for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases. The objective of this Strategy is to reduce risks on food security, sustain livelihoods and facilitate safe trade in livestock and animal products.

He pointed out that by establishing strategies for each disease identified as a priority, as well as the development, maintenance and sustainability of capacities, it will be possible to prevent and control them. He also pointed out that great coordination is required to detect the activities of both FAO and WOA that can contribute to the Global Strategy and identify new opportunities, such as including in it the results of the actions of the main collaborators.

Through an electronic survey, all participants expressed interest in receiving further details on GF-TADs discussions at the global level as well as further involvement in preparing the Region's position and interests for the global GF-TADs meetings.

Closing and Reflection – Day 1 of the Conference

Dr. Rosemary Sifford shared the reflections of the first day of the Conference.

First, she thanked all those responsible for organising the Conference. She then highlighted the importance of working on animal health and welfare, with a focus on the impact it has on human health and the environment. She also stressed the importance of having a unified voice of the Members of the Americas and of working together to support the implementation of projects and strategies at regional level.

WEDNESDAY 9 NOVEMBER 2022

ONE HEALTH SESSION

Antimicrobial Resistance (AMR): Activities in the Americas

Dr. Maria Mesplet, Project Officer at the Regional Representation for the Americas, presented the activities carried out in the Americas with regard to AMR, highlighting the inter-institutional collaboration, including the Tripartite, to which, this year, UNEP (United Nations Environment Programme) has joined, thus, working at the Quadripartite level. She indicated that other regional organisations such as IICA, OIRSA, CVP and SG-CAN are also part of this collaboration.

She presented the highlights of the project financed by the European Union (EU), entitled "Working Together to Fight Antimicrobial Resistance", which benefits seven South American countries, as well as the AMR-MPTF Project (The Antimicrobial Resistance Multi-Partner Trust Fund), entitled "Fighting Antimicrobial Resistance in Peru under the One Health Approach".

An electronic survey was conducted on priority activities for the Americas region, which revealed that *developing AMR outreach and awareness-raising activities* is considered a top priority, followed by the need for *support to develop and strengthen the implementation of integrated AMR surveillance* as well as *to strengthen governance under the "One Health" concept*. In addition, the need to *promote the development of Public-Private Partnerships* was highlighted.

Influenza: Standing Group of Experts on Avian Influenza (SGE-AI)

Dr. Catya Martinez, Sub-Regional Representative for Central America, presented the new GF-TADs Standing Group of Experts on Avian Influenza (SGE-AI) as a recommendation of the GF-TADs Regional Steering Committee for the Americas. She also highlighted the importance of implementing activities to support the countries of the region and encouraged the participating Delegates to recommend experts to be part of this group and work on actions for the prevention, control and eradication of the disease.

She reported that the first virtual meeting of the SGE-AI will be held before the end of 2022, and that a face-to-face meeting is being planned to be held in Mexico in 2023, thanks to the generous financial contribution of Mexico.

Participants were consulted through a survey regarding other activities that should be considered as a priority, with the majority selecting wildlife surveillance and measures to ensure trade continuity in the event of an outbreak. To a lesser extent, the possibility of vaccination against the disease was selected.

Wildlife: Proposal of Strategic Activities for the Americas

Dr. Maria Eugenia Chimenti, Technical Assistant at the Regional Representation for the Americas, presented the activities considered as priorities for the Americas region. These include, among others, the mapping of wildlife populations and their migrations, disease prioritisation and case definitions as well as the promotion of epidemiological surveillance and laboratory diagnosis with the appropriate capacity building. This framework also includes compliance with WOAHA Standards and Guidelines with their implementation in national legislation.

She added that all these actions aim to anticipate, reduce and manage the risk of "spill over events" affecting wildlife, livestock, and humans at the human-environment-animal interface. These actions are aligned with the Wildlife Health Management Framework, developed by WOAHA and global in scope.

Finally, it was emphasised that the best alternative to achieve results in the field of wildlife was the organisation of activities in response to the specific needs of the Region as communicated by the Bureau Members

When consulted on the most relevant issues to be implemented by Members, the majority proposed that *improving surveillance and early detection systems* is a priority, followed by *improving laboratory diagnostic capabilities* and the development of *Public-Private Partnerships*, together with improving *Disease Notification*.

AQUATIC ANIMALS HEALTH SESSION

Toward a future of improved aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide: WOAHA activities of importance to the region

Dr. Alicia Gallardo Lagno, Vice-President of the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission, presented the proposed aquatic animal health activities for the Americas.

She explained that the goal is to have better Standards in place based on the needs of the region, in addition to capacity building needs, and the conditions to provide coordinated and timely responses to regional emergencies. She added that this seeks to provide the Americas region leadership in aquatic animal health.

To this end, the creation of the *Network of the Americas for Aquatic Animal Health* was proposed, with the Secretariat in charge of the Regional Representation, and the direct participation of National Focal Points, as well as global, regional and sub-regional organisations, including FAO, IICA, OIRSA, CAHFSA/CARICOM, CaribVET, CVP and SG-CAN. In addition, the Collaborating Centre for Antimicrobial Stewardship in Aquaculture (CASA), PANVET and other relevant actors identified in both the private and public sectors will be included.

This Network will have a small Executive Group of National Focal Points, equitably representing the entire Americas Region. The Secretariat will be managed by the Regional Representation for the Americas, and funding will be sought for one person to carry out support of this Network on a part-time basis.

The participants responded to an electronic survey, selecting the most important challenges for the region. The need to *strengthen the technical competencies of the Aquatic Animal Health Authorities* was the most important, followed by *emergency preparedness* and the *strengthening of WOAHA Standards*, with the *development of new Standards that respond to regional needs*.

In addition, a second survey gathered information on priorities for moving forward in the Americas, with the majority of responses proposing the need to *develop guidelines on biosecurity in aquaculture establishments and at the national level* as well as for *surveillance and disease-free self-declaration, the definition of disease-free compartments* and the *Responsible and Prudent Use of antimicrobials to prevent AMR*.

Progress and results of the aquatic animal health project funded by Colombia

Dr. Hernán Rojas, consultant of Ceres BCA, gave a presentation on the project financed by Colombia. He referred to the first stage of the project, which focused on the development of an aquatic animal health surveillance strategy in Colombia, Ecuador and Peru.

He highlighted the methodology applied, stressing the importance of identifying risks along the value chain, as well as the verification of surveillance capacities and the identification of gaps.

Finally, Dr. Rojas pointed out the critical elements to be considered in the development of surveillance plans. He emphasised the need to develop competencies in epidemiology, health management and disease knowledge, and the implementation of risk-based surveillance taking into account value chains, with simple health information systems. In addition, he stressed the relevance and positive results of Public-Private Partnerships for aquatic animal disease surveillance.

Activities of the Collaborating Centre on Antimicrobial Stewardship in Aquaculture (CASA)

Dr. Javiera Cornejo Kelly, representing the Collaborating Centre, presented its main activities. She reported that the objective is to contribute to the capacity building of Aquatic Animal Health Services, by bringing scientific knowledge and advice on the responsible and prudent use of antimicrobials.

She added that the action plan for the upcoming years includes identifying the main barriers to the implementation of the *Aquatic Code Standards on the Use of Antimicrobials* as well as detecting the needs of Aquatic Animal Health Services in antimicrobial stewardship and developing proposals for collaboration. Finally, she reported on the plan to develop practices on the *Responsible and Prudent Use of Antimicrobials in aquaculture*.

An electronic survey was conducted among participants to identify strategic areas for progress in the Americas. Responses mostly emphasised the importance of *raising awareness and disseminating information on responsible and prudent use for aquaculture farmers*, as well as *improvements in biosecurity*, achieving a *better understanding of AMR phenomena in the aquatic environment* and the *creation of Public-Private Partnerships, strengthening capacities and training*, in order to *optimise the use of antimicrobials*.

Regional Strategic Vision - Aquatic Animal Health and activities in the Americas

As a general observation to all the presentations in the area of Aquatic Animal Strategies, it was concluded that one of the key elements to achieve progress in the Americas region is the active involvement of the Bureau in defining objectives, work plans and roadmaps. In all cases, public-private collaboration was considered essential. In addition, the need for support in the implementation of the network was highlighted, for which it will be necessary to obtain funding for the hiring of a part-time staff member.

ANIMAL WELFARE SESSION

Animal Welfare: Proposals for advancing in the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for the Americas

Dr. María Eugenia Chimenti commented that the Regional Animal Welfare Strategy for the Americas was approved during the 21st Regional Conference in 2012.

She also reported that the Strategy was reviewed this year, for which purpose it was passed on to the Members of the Americas and to the international and regional organisations that have an agreement with WOA. The compendium of proposals for improvements was presented to the members of the Bureau and the Council for the definition of the best way forward.

As presented by the Chair of the Bureau, it was concluded that the best way to approach this Strategy is to first ensure that the needs of the Region are communicated by the Bureau so that activities are defined in line with the expectations of the Members, then by forming National Animal Welfare Focal Points discussion groups, and involving the Regional and Sub-Regional Organisations. It is expected that this first approach will gather key information to move forward and define activities and priority areas for the Americas.

Discussion on Animal Welfare priorities

A survey was conducted on the existence of National Animal Welfare Committees in Members, which showed that less than half have *Committees involving the public and private sector*, as well as a limited number of *Committees involving only the public sector*. In addition, one third of the respondents indicated that they did not have a Committee.

Later, the participants were consulted on animal welfare priorities, and most of the comments focused on the need to review and update national legal frameworks, aligning them to WOA Standards, as well as the *development of codes of practice*. In addition, it was considered a priority to carry out *training and communication actions* aimed at those responsible for animals and the population in general. The importance of *public-private partnerships* was also emphasised as a means to achieve better results.

CAPACITY BUILDING AND VETERINARY WORKFORCE SESSION

Capacity building tools to support Veterinary services: the PVS Pathway and the Training Platform

Ms. Barbara Alessandrini elaborated on the evolution of the capacity building system in order to adapt to new challenges and changes including, among others, the new roles for Veterinary Services in line with WOAHA 7th Strategic Plan roadmap (wildlife, AMR, aquatic animals, intersectoral collaboration, "One Health", among others). All these new concepts or aspects required the revision of the PVS Program to understand how and where to include them in order to achieve an updated tool in line with the new needs of the Members.

She stressed that the two main pillars governing WOAHA's capacity building system are the training platform and the PVS Process. The training platform develops and offers a varied training proposal, mainly online, and in the three official languages of the Organisation.

With regard to the PVS Pathway, she highlighted the reasons why Members should rely on it, including, among others, the fact that it is considered by donors as evidence not only of the weaknesses but also of the strengths of the Veterinary Services. It is expected that PVS reports will be increasingly requested by countries and also by donors to assess the possibilities/needs for investment in countries.

She also presented details on the ongoing evolution of the PVS Process, highlighting, among others, the digitalisation of the program, which is currently ongoing and whose results should be presented in the near future.

Finally, she elaborated on how veterinary workforce development is positioned within the PVS process by stating that, from the orientation phase on, there is an opportunity to place the importance of workforce development in the context of the PVS Process and it is primarily in the specific support phase that numerous tools are offered to help characterise and support the legal and regulatory environment necessary for the effective involvement of veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals in the veterinary workforce.

Workforce assessment, planning, and development

Dr. David Sherman briefly commented on WOAHA's perspective on the Veterinary Workforce, highlighting the importance of having a sufficient number of adequately trained personnel for the proper functioning of the national Veterinary Services. His presentation outlined the following:

- There are challenges to workforce development, in particular the lack of access to key data and the absence of a supportive regulatory environment;
- Veterinary paraprofessionals can play an important role in filling the identified gaps but they must be properly trained and regulated, their responsibilities clearly defined, and their work supervised.
- WOAHA offers tools to support veterinary workforce development, including PVS assessment and monitoring, gap analysis, national workforce development workshops (under pilot), and the new workforce assessment tool (under development).
- The veterinary legislation support program, the Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) twinning program, the VSB support mission, the Veterinary Education Establishments (VEE) twinning program, and the veterinary paraprofessional curriculum support missions (in pilot phase) are also considered tools that support an enabling environment for effective workforce development.

- WOAHA can assist Members in workforce assessment and planning and in creating an enabling environment for the effective integration of veterinary paraprofessionals into the veterinary workforce.

Observatory

Dr. Gaspar Avendaño-Perez, WOAHA Technical Coordinator, gave a brief update on the Observatory. He began by informing that the Observatory was now under the responsibility of the new Data Integration Department (DID).

He then explained that this program's mission is to monitor the implementation of WOAHA's international standards and that its main objectives were: 1) the collection of information on the implementation of WOAHA's standards, 2) the identification of gaps in their implementation and the understanding of the challenges, and 3) the dissemination of information on the implementation of WOAHA's standards.

He stressed that the aim is not to point fingers, blame or shame Members, nor to resolve bilateral trade disputes.

Finally, he reported that the Observatory will publish its first implementation review report in December 2022. He confirmed that the report will preserve the anonymity of Members by showing only aggregated data, including data already in the public domain.

Closing and Reflection – Day 2 of the Conference

As on the first day, Dr. Rosemary Sifford shared the reflections of the second day of the conference with the participants.

She once again emphasised the importance and potential of the Americas Region to work together on priority issues and projects through partnerships and collaborations. She also highlighted the interaction of the Aquatic Animal Focal Points as an example of collaboration to move forward in the implementation of strategies at regional level.

REGIONAL COMMISSION DISCUSSION

Proposed dates and venue for the 27th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas in 2024

Upon Dr. Juarez Juarez's consultation with the Delegates, a proposal was received from Ecuador to host the next Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas. The proposal was unanimously supported.

Eng. Wilson Patricio Almeida Granja, Delegate of Ecuador, welcomed the support of the Delegates for the selection of his country.

The date of the Regional Conference will be defined at a later stage and in coordination with WOAHA General Directorate.

Regional Core Group: Presentation of the concept and Terms of Reference

Dr Luis Barcos briefly described the concept of the Regional Core Group, its structure and operation. He emphasised that this proposal is not to create a new body but simply to harmonise with other WOAHA regions and formalise this regional communication mechanism. The Delegates agreed that the management as a Regional Core Group, involving the members of the Bureau of the Regional Commission and the members of the Council representing the Americas, was something that had already been successfully applied in the region, prior to its formalisation.

Dr Barcos acknowledged that the regional communication and coordination mechanism did indeed already exist in the region and stressed that the idea was simply to formalise and harmonise it with the rest of the regions.

Such regional communication and coordination mechanism allows to facilitate the work of the Bureau of the Regional Commission including acting as a bridge between the region and WOAHA to ensure that all the needs of the Members are properly communicated and addressed by the Organisation. This is in line with the Bureau's proposal presented by Dr. Juarez Juarez to facilitate coordination and follow-up of the region and its needs and expectations.

Closing

The President of the World Assembly and the President of the Regional Commission expressed their satisfaction with the two days of productive and interactive meetings. They acknowledged the relevance of the topics on the agenda and emphasised that the information shared will allow them to draw conclusions that will support the work of the Regional Commission and WOAHA in general.

Dr. Montserrat Arroyo, WOAHA Deputy Director General, thanked the participants for the two days of interactive and productive discussions. She highlighted that the conference had been a success as it had allowed to highlight tangible conclusions and key messages for the various competent authorities of Members and for WOAHA. She thanked WOAHA staff for organising the event and expressed special gratitude to the government of Ecuador for hosting the next Regional Conference.

The Conference ended at 8:00 p.m. (Paris time).