

**MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS**

Paris, 16 May 2023

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**REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE
REGIONAL COMMISSION FOR THE AMERICAS**

Paris, 16 May 2023

The Regional Commission for the Americas met by videoconference on 16 May 2023 at 4:00 p.m. CEST. The meeting was attended by 102 participants, including Delegates and observers from 26 Members of the Commission and representatives from 10 International or Regional Organisations:

Members of the Commission:

Argentina, Barbados, Belize, Bolivia, Brazil, Canada, Chile, Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Curacao, Dominican Rep, Ecuador, El Salvador, United States of America, Guatemala, Guyana, Honduras, Jamaica, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Paraguay, Peru, Suriname, and Uruguay

International/Regional Organisations:

ALA⁷³, CaribVET⁷⁴, CVP⁷⁵, Feedlatina⁷⁶, HealthforAnimals⁷⁷ ICFAW⁷⁸, IICA⁷⁹, OIRSA⁸⁰, SG-CAN⁸¹ y WRO⁸².

The meeting was chaired by Dr Wilmer José Juárez Juárez, President of the Regional Commission for the Americas and Delegate of Nicaragua, supported by Dr Luis Osvaldo Barcos, Regional Representative for the Americas, and Dr Catya Martínez Rivas, Subregional Representative for Central America.

1. Adoption of the Agenda

The Agenda, described in the Appendix, was unanimously adopted.

2. Information regarding the change of name of the Sub-Regional Representation for Central America

Dr Jean-Phillipe Dop, WOAHP Deputy Director General, Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities, explained the process regarding the proposal to be presented via a resolution for adoption by the World Assembly of Delegates to change the name of the Subregional Representation in Panama currently referred as “Sub-Regional Representation for Central America” to be named “Sub-Regional Representation for Central America and the Caribbean”. This is to align the name of the representation with its geographical scope.

The Delegates of the Americas, and in particular the Members of the Caribbean Sub-region, agreed to the proposal.

⁷³ ALA: Latin American Poultry Association

⁷⁴ CaribVET: Caribbean Animal Health Network

⁷⁵ CVP: Permanent Veterinary Committee of the Southern Cone

⁷⁶ Feedlatina: association of Latin American and Caribbean feed industry

⁷⁷ HealthforAnimals: global animal health association

⁷⁸ ICFAW: coalition of international global animal welfare organizations

⁷⁹ IICA: Inter-American Institute for Cooperation on Agriculture

⁸⁰ OIRSA: International Regional Organisation for Plant and Animal Health

⁸¹ SG-CAN: General Secretariat of the Andean Community

⁸² WRO: World Renderers Organization

3. Outcomes of the 26th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas, held virtually on 8 and 9 November 2022

Dr Rosemary Sifford, Secretary General of the Regional Commission for the Americas and Delegate of the United States of America, presented a short summary of the discussions held during the Regional Conference, highlighting *inter alia*, the definition of the work priorities for the region, and emphasising the convergence of actions to improve animal health and welfare and reduce antimicrobial resistance, while seeking to achieve sustainable food production.

She then elaborated on other topics discussed during the Regional Conference, including ongoing projects on antimicrobial resistance and high health, high performances (HHP) horses, as well as the actions carried out under the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) and its various Working Groups focusing on African Swine Fever and Avian Influenza.

She continued by outlining the strategic actions planned for aquatic animals and wildlife, as issues that have a transverse impact on animal health and welfare, and human populations.

Dr Sifford closed by saying that the Americas Region had not only succeeded in defining priorities, but also in prioritising its organisational efforts to tackle the challenges in a coordinated and efficient manner.

4. Confirmation of the venue of the 27th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas, to be held in November 2024

Eng. Wilson Patricio Almeida Granja, Delegate of Ecuador, reiterated his country's offer to host the 27th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas in November 2024. He added that it is hoped to hold the event in the Galapagos Islands. Exact dates will be defined at a later stage in consultation with WOAHA Director General.

5. Proposal of a Technical Item I (with questionnaire) to be included in the agenda of the 27th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas

The Regional Commission proposed the following technical item (with questionnaire to Members) for inclusion in the agenda of the 27th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Americas:

“Current scenario of critical veterinary products”

6. Proposal of strategic topics of global interest to be addressed by WOAHA through various means (Scientific Review, Newsletter, scientific paper, technical item or during a specific activity/meeting)

The Regional Commission proposed the following three strategic topics of global interest to be addressed by the WOAHA through various means:

1. “Avian influenza: vaccination programs, types of vaccines, trade restrictions, impact on species other than poultry and possible pandemic”
2. “Vaccine development, use and strategies”
3. “Maintenance of surveillance/ animal health testing in active war zones and/or mass civil unrest”
4. “Worldwide scenario of critical veterinary products”

7. Application from USA, Brazil and Mexico for a WOAAH Collaborating Centre consortium on Economics of Animal Health

Dr Rosemary Sifford presented a proposal to the Regional Commission for a consortium of WOAAH Collaborating Centres on the Economics of Animal Health to be led by Kansas State University. The partners are the Department of Economics, Management and Sociology of the University of São Paulo (Brazil), the Faculty of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine of the University of Brasilia (Brazil), the Department of Economics, Management and Rural Development of the Faculty of Veterinary and Zoological Medicine of the National Autonomous University of Mexico (Mexico), and the Economic Sciences Faculty of the Paul G. Allen School for Global Animal Health of Washington State University (United States of America).

She presented an overview of the consortium and reported that full details had been sent to the Delegates in advance.

Both Dr Eduardo de Azevedo Pedrosa Cunha, Delegate of Brazil, and Dr Fernando Rivera Espinoza, on behalf of the Delegate of Mexico, expressed their countries' commitment to this initiative, convinced that this Collaborating Centre will contribute with strategic benefits for progress in the region, by providing proven, globally validated knowledge and methodologies to enhance decision-making and the effectiveness of actions implemented by the Veterinary Services and their strategic allies.

The Commission approved this proposal.

8. Request of Saint Vincent and the Grenadines to become a WOAAH Member

Dr Wilmer Juárez Juárez informed the participants of the application by Saint Vincent and the Grenadines for accession as a WOAAH Member Country. This request has been approved by the Council and will be submitted to the World Assembly of Delegates for approval. He added that this was in line with the objective of increasing the number of Caribbean Members of WOAAH.

9. Outcomes of the Second meeting of the GF-TADs Standing Group of Experts on Avian Influenza (SGE-AI)

Dr Ximena Melon, Vice-President of the Regional Commission and Delegate of Argentina, presented the main topics of the meeting's Recommendations, published on the Regional Representation website.

She highlighted several key issues such as the importance of applying WOAAH Standards, primarily to avoid unnecessary trade barriers, addressing the transparency and reporting of Avian Influenza cases, be they high or low pathogenic forms and in domestic and wild animals, in addition to vaccination. Furthermore, she stressed the importance of having protocols for applying zoning and compartmentalisation systems, as well as self-declaration of health status.

As regards vaccination, she pointed out that the Recommendations stress the need to have programmes based on risks and national realities, using high quality antigenically adapted and regularly checked vaccines. She emphasised the importance of conducting period reviews of vaccination plans, in line with epidemiological surveillance to guarantee disease-free status where vaccination is administered.

10. Relevant activities of the Regional and Sub-Regional Representation. Summary of the meeting of the Bureau of the Regional Commission held in September 2022

Dr Catya Martinez, Sub-regional Representative for Central America, presented the findings of the meeting, which defined the basis for drawing up action plans and regional strategies for animal welfare and aquatic animal health, with the involvement of the various sub-regions and Bureau Members.

In addition, she mentioned the proposal made by the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations to support the creation of a discussion platform where Members can exchange views on the WOHAI Standards' review process and any shared regional positions, the induction and training of recently appointed Delegates and their National Focal Points, all intended to ensure continuous improvement of regional communications.

Lastly, she listed the region's ongoing projects, highlighting those that address Antimicrobial Resistance, HHP horses and the GF-TADs, expressing her gratitude to the Members and Regional and Sub-Regional Organisations.

Ms. Jennifer Lasley, from the Capacity Building Department, announced briefly the PVS Information System which is under development and targeted for global launch at the 100th anniversary which will be commemorated during the 2024 General Session. She underlined the benefits for members expected with the new system and encouraged Delegates to visit the PVS Kiosk during the General Session.

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11. Financial Summary Report (related SG financial documents)

Mr Xavier Pairault, WOHAI Director of Administration, briefly explained the rationale behind the proposal of increasing the statutory contributions rates by 15% for 2024. His presentation was a summary of the financial report available on the GS website.

He reminded the meeting that 1) discussions regarding the financial sustainability of WOHAI regular budget started during the Council meeting in September 2021 considering mainly the impact of the digitalisation as well as the growing number and types of activities supported by WOHAI in order to respond to its Member's needs; 2) A Council special meeting held in December 2021 that supported the proposal presented and finally accepted by the Assembly in 2022 for increasing the statutory contributions of 30% over 2023 – 2025 period, with a 15% increase adopted for 2023 and a 7.5% foreseen increase for 2024 and 2025; 3) An explanatory note was shared with Delegates explaining the rationale behind the increase proposed in 2022. Such rationale remains relevant for 2023 with a key additional issue, the drastic deterioration of the economic situation.

The Director of Administration explained that since the adoption of resolution 15/2018, OECD Consumer price index of the year N-1 is taken into account for the contribution of the year N+1. Therefore 2024 minimum increase would be +9,6% at least.

Comparing the OECD-Total CPI in the last year's period against the annual increase of statutory contributions, it is evident that WOHAI increase rates since 2019 had been effectively extremely low (= - 0,3%).

Referring to WOHAI's 2024 Budgeted Work Programme preparation, Mr Pairault explained that the impact of high inflation across all goods and services, coupled with the energy crisis, has already taken a toll on WOHAI's capacity to deliver activities. The inflation rate will nullify and consume the positive gains from the increased statutory contributions. Consequently, at the February 2023 meeting, the Council unanimously agreed to request the Membership to increase 2024 statutory contributions by 15% to cushion the impact of inflation. Such increase leads to a 9.6% of effective increase over a 6-year period and is used to cover fixed and recurring costs as well as key investments such as the digital transformation, status recognition activities and Regional Offices functioning.

The Director of Administration concluded highlighting that statutory and extraordinary contributions through the Regular Budget are a fundamental source of funding and are essential for the functioning of the Organisation. It provides a level of funding reliability and allows resources to be assigned and aligned with the activities and strategic plans of the Organisation. They are essential for WOA's financial sustainability.

12. **Facilitated access to the voting platform**

Ms Lisa Brouard from Legal Affairs Unit reminded Delegates that, in the context of the 90th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates voting on some resolutions and partial elections will be held online using two voting platforms, Platform 1 to vote for some resolutions in advance, and Platform 2 to vote during the partial elections.

Similar to 2022, these two platforms will be managed by the service provider 'UK Engage'. However, unlike the previous year, the voting platforms will only be accessible through the Delegate Portal. Delegates received a message from VotingSupport@woah.org with such information and how to access the platforms.

Within the Delegate Portal, a link will be displayed for each of the voting platforms. Each link is unique and will be automatically authenticated.

Delegates with no right to vote will not see platform 1 but it is key for them to login for platform 2 for partial elections and even if they cannot vote it is important to ensure the quorum.

Early votes for resolutions must be cast online (Platform 1) from 15 May to 22 May (23:59 CEST).

Partial election voting will be online (Platform 2) and will take place on Thursday 25 May at 11:30 CEST at the General Session venue. Only Delegates present in the room will be able to vote.

Delegates will be able to access the links by using their own electronic devices.

Delegates need to validate the access to the Delegates Portal following instructions sent through an automatically generated email from 'Microsoft Invitations on behalf of the WOA'. This email contains information on how to validate access to the Delegate Portal.

Delegates were encouraged to validate their access to the Portal as soon as possible to ensure having access to the online voting platforms.

13. **Proposal of a Member of the Regional Commission for the Americas to the position of "Member of the Council" and of a Member for the Bureau of the Regional Commission**

Dr Idoyaga Benítez, President of the World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Paraguay, reminded participants that the Delegate of Cuba had stepped down, leaving vacant the position of Members of the Council which required a partial election to be held.

Following a discussion involving all Delegates present in the meeting, Dr Wilmer José Juárez Juárez, Delegate of Nicaragua, was proposed as Member of the Council for a one-year period.

Such position will last for one year period until the election for the next three-year mandate of the Council, which will be held in May 2024.

There followed a discussion on the various nominations to cover the vacancy at the Regional Commission Bureau, to be composed as follows:

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| President: | Dr Ximena Melón (Argentina) |
| Vice president: | Dr Rosemary Sifford (United States of America) |
| Vice president: | Dr Arnold Dwarkasing (Curacao) |
| General Secretary: | Dr Rafael Enrique Rodríguez Alvarado (Honduras) |

The above will remain in office for one year, until the elections for the next three-year mandate of the Regional Commission in May 2024.

These proposals will be presented to the World Assembly for election.

14. **Closing**

The meeting officially ended at 7:15 p.m. CEST.