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Addressing Avian Influenza: the challenges of partnership

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The current globalisation of our world is unprecedented in the history of humanity.

The continuous increase in the movements of goods and people in the world, allow pathogens to have access to the entire planet and to attack "naïve" human and animal populations, as well finding new opportunities to incorporate new genetic materials from other pathogens, allowing them to adopt new behaviour in their pathogenicity against humans and animals.

This is described by our experts as a potential 'Perfect Storm'. A large part of the world is still in the eye of the storm, but countries which are currently fighting avian influenza are already in the fringe of this eye.

Let me recall that seventy five per cent of emerging diseases in humans are of animal origin.

We must accept that surveillance of emerging and re-emerging animal diseases worldwide should be considered as an International Public Good. One country not able to carry out early detection and rapid response to animal disease outbreaks can represent a threat to all the others.

It is impossible to prevent and control these new threats without new partnerships at global and regional levels and without a permanent dialogue between countries through appropriate institutions.

It is also impossible to address this new situation without solidarity among rich, in transition and developing countries, and it is evident that the interest of rich countries is to support the others in order to protect themselves.

We are currently witnessing an unprecedented situation linked with avian influenza. We know the solutions, and if we are able to obtain consensus, we willl be able to prevent similar crises in the future.

In the field of prevention of the spread of animal pathogens, Veterinary Services are on the front line worldwide. We know the modalities of appropriate governance, legislations, infrastructures and human and material resources needed to prevent and control avian influenza and other emerging and re-emerging animal diseases dangerous to humans. OIE Member Countries have already adopted standards on quality of Veterinary Services, as WHO did in the field of International Health Regulations.

We propose to governments and donors to support our proposals developed jointly with FAO in strong collaboration with WHO and the World Bank.

We propose financial support for the creation of a global forum for the definition of new appropriate policies, building new alliances between international organisations, private sector and consumers, and common communication policies on threats from animal diseases.

We propose to support mirror regional actions through Regional Animal Health Centres with the involvement of relevant Regional Organisations, within the framework of the current FAO/OIE GF-TADs regional mechanism. This mechanism will allow coordination of regional policies, as well as providing regional technical inputs through evaluation of Veterinary Services, capacity building and technical support to countries, on request.

The evaluation of Veterinary Services, using the tools already adopted by our Member Countries, will be crucial for the preparation and the design of national investments to be made in order to address the prevention and control of avian influenza, and to evaluate the needs of capacity building and alliances between official Veterinary Services and the private sector (including farmers), for example for the implementation of compensation mechanisms for farmers in case of disease outbreaks.

I am convinced that new global, regional and national mechanisms proposed by the OIE and FAO are International Public Goods and that these three levels are all indispensable for the achievement of our objectives.

I am convinced too that solidarity is also a key word today.

Thank you for your attention.