



Foreword

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Technical Item:

Evolving to become a strategic driving force for OIE

Each year the World Assembly of Delegates identifies a [Technical Item](#) of strategic importance, to explore a challenge or a new direction. Similarly, Technical Items are selected and reported during Regional Commission Conferences. In recent years we have been evolving the system for delivery of the Technical Item during the General Session: drawing on a broader set of evidence and intelligence than the traditional questionnaire; providing the rapporteur greater technical support from the OIE secretariat to conduct analysis and explore the selected topic more deeply; and connecting the topic to a relevant thematic OIE work programme. This new methodology is ensuring the Technical Item continues to drive reflection, options exploration, and design-thinking so that it remains an important mechanism to provide strategic and technical guidance on our programmes.

In 2018 the World Assembly selected the topic “Required competencies of Veterinary Services in the context of international trade: opportunities and challenges”. Dr Thanawat Tiensin, Permanent Representative of Thailand to the UN agencies in Rome (FAO, IFAD, WFP) and Chairperson of the Committee on World Food Security was selected as the rapporteur, and Drs Nadège Leboucq, Francisco D’Alessio and Karen Bucher from OIE Paris assigned to assist the analysis and report writing. Despite the cancellation of the General Session¹, we are very pleased to deliver the Technical Item in this innovative format of the OIE News. I will not summarise their findings and recommendations: I will leave that to Dr Tiensin and his co-authors, and I highly recommend you read their detailed report. I would, however, like to reflect on how this experience is shaping our ongoing work to transform and integrate the Technical Item into our strategic process.

The 2020 Technical Item provides a clear link with three strategic imperatives for OIE:

- To continue to evolve our Capacity Development programme to offer a comprehensive training programme for official veterinarians through the launch of the [OIE Training Platform and Training Portal](#);
- To improve the offerings in our Capacity Development programme that are specifically related to the role Veterinary Services play in the multi-lateral rules-based systems for international trade, with a

¹ Due to the COVID-19 global situation, the 2020 OIE General Session has been cancelled. An adapted procedure has been adopted to allow the World Assembly of Delegates to conduct essential business.

view to supporting increasing harmonisation of the systems and processes that govern trade in animals and animal products with the international standards of the OIE;

- To use the [OIE Observatory](#) as a means of integrating, synthesizing and analysing the data and intelligence we receive through various means to achieve insights into the needs of our Members and the challenges they face during implementation of international standards. These include sources internal to the OIE system, such as OIE-WAHIS, the PVS Pathway, previous Technical Items, and dossiers submitted for Official Disease Status Recognition and Self-Declarations, as well as external sources such as the WTO through mechanisms under the SPS Agreement.

The resulting report is an impressive testament to the analytical skills of the rapporteur and co-authors, while also signalling an important endorsement of the new modalities for Technical Item 1. The five parts of the report provide rich information summarising international systems and their implications for Veterinary Services currently engaged in or aspiring to expand activities supporting trade. An analytical framework is constructed, sources of intelligence identified, evidence gathered and prepared for analysis, and analytical findings used to develop recommendations that will improve delivery of programmes for the benefit of our Members.

The OIE PVS Pathway, the Observatory and the Training Platform receive important strategic guidance on their ongoing evolution as a result. Similarly, these programmes demonstrate how they can serve our organisation, its mandate, and Members. The lessons learned during the 2020 Technical Item with respect to processing information from PVS evaluation reports will be important during development of the database serving the OIE PVS Pathway. The challenges identified in the analytical process signal for us that we have some work ahead to improve our data management approach in the multiple channels that will feed in to the OIE Observatory, work that will flow from the OIE Digital Transformation strategy.

Digital transformation of the OIE is an imperative signalled through the 7th Strategic Plan development (the adoption of which has been delayed due to COVID-19). E-learning platforms provide an efficient mechanism to expand the reach of our training services. The OIE Training Platform and Training Portal will not only allow Delegates and Focal Points, but potentially all members of Veterinary Services, to benefit from our training offerings.

I trust you enjoy reading the 2020 OIE Technical Item, and while doing so, recognise the important milestone it represents for us: not just as a reference point for the year the world encountered the COVID-19 pandemic, but also as an important time in the history of the OIE. I hope that in future the 2020 Technical Item will be identified as an event that served to accelerate the increasing integration of our various systems, many of which until now have only been loosely affiliated, but which should be recognised as a coherent whole, efficiently serving the interests and needs of our Members.
