

**Dr Monique Éloit's Candidacy Speech for the position of Director General of
the OIE for the period 2021-2025 / GS May 2021**

28 May 2021 - Director General Elections

Mr President, Delegates

2020 has been a dramatic reminder that animal health is not a closed domain that is exclusively dedicated to the health of, and trade in, domestic animal production. The OIE must go beyond animal disease control and take a more systemic approach to animal health. The OIE must continue to evolve in this direction and I'd like to share my vision with you.

For more than a year, we have all been preoccupied with the COVID-19 pandemic. From the very first weeks of the crisis, the OIE began to mobilise, and it produced several recommendations to help its Members contribute to the management of this public health crisis. The Technical Item presented earlier was an excellent reminder of the action we took. We have, therefore, mobilised experts and resources for a crisis that only marginally concerns the animal world, because although the animal origin of the disease seems certain, transmission is from human to human. We will continue to be involved through an ambitious policy of implementing wildlife risk surveillance and monitoring of the trade in wild animals, because it is now clear that the OIE and Veterinary Services cannot focus solely on diseases of domestic production species.

Our work covers a number of intersecting areas. Our primary aim is to improve the production of animal products by limiting losses due to disease, but we also contribute to the sustainable development of these products by encouraging practices that are more respectful of animals. The protection of human health by controlling zoonoses and monitoring pathogens that pose a risk is also an intrinsic element of our mandate. We are therefore at the heart of One Health issues, i.e. issues that relate to the Human–Animal–Environment interface.

The OIE is recognised as a partner in One Health policies and our voice is heard. This is the result of several years of engaging with these issues, notably through our membership of the Tripartite Alliance with WHO and FAO and through our presence at high-level political forums. Consequently, I am confident that the OIE will have a role to play in future work to develop new legal instruments for managing pandemics, which several Heads of State are calling for.

But let's not forget the socio-economic impacts of this crisis, notably the increase in food insecurity for so many populations: how could we stay out of the debate on the role of production animals – terrestrial and aquatic – in the response to this problem and in efforts to achieve the Sustainable Development Goal of 'Zero Hunger'?

Moreover, in the majority of countries, agriculture and agro-industries are still the largest employers, so we must also consider our role in achieving several other goals, including 'No Poverty', 'Gender Equality' and 'Decent Work and Economic Growth'. Through its commitment to improving the sanitary quality of animal production, the OIE contributes to the socio-economic viability of rural and pastoral populations; our work must also help women to be recognised as actors that are of equal importance to men; our work must help to offer a future to young people.

Many other issues are of concern to us and must be taken into consideration when we define animal health policies. The environmental challenges connected to food production and consumption must be integrated into our thinking, as should societal expectations for greater respect for animals.

In addition to these issues that are directly related to our activities, there is the issue of the ongoing major technological changes to our IT tools, particularly our data management tools, since one of the primary missions of the OIE is to collect and disseminate information about the world animal health situation. This historical role has evolved, as both Veterinary Services and interested stakeholders have a greater need for processed information that provides added value and supports decision-making.

In this complex environment, the OIE must continually adapt, because the Organisation has a role to play in responding to all these challenges. Our Organisation must provide countries that need it with the support necessary to respond to these same challenges at national and regional level. The conclusions of the Technical Item presented at the 2019 General Session explicitly highlighted the lack of preparedness of several countries and their lack of the means to remedy this problem. The OIE is here to help them to overcome these weaknesses.

Since the 1st of January 2016, you have entrusted me with the task of leading the OIE. I have done this in line with the Strategic Plan that you adopted in May 2015, whilst bearing in mind the general context that I've just mentioned. It was important to me that the OIE should not continue to focus solely on the long-standing issues related to the control of major livestock diseases, but that it should go beyond this by engaging more significantly with veterinary public health issues, that is to say, issues that interest not only Veterinary Services but all of society. I believe that we have succeeded in doing this and that the OIE has consolidated its position among the important international partner organisations.

As for the organisation itself, I wanted to lead it by involving Members and personnel more closely. Significant work has been carried out over the last few years, leading to:

1. Better development of strategies through participatory reflection on policies and programmes: for example, the OIE finalised its antimicrobial resistance strategy, which allows it to play an important role in the governance established by the United Nations, and the same will soon be true for One Health issues; I replaced the Working Group on animal welfare with a Forum that makes it possible to take a fresh look at this issue, as our involvement in this area must not be reduced to the development of a few standards; the redesign of the PVS Pathway was well thought through and is now proceeding on the basis of an external evaluation; after several years, we will finally have an aquatic animal strategy, etc... You have been involved in these developments at conferences

and forums, and the Technical Items presented at the General Sessions now provide valuable input into the strategic orientation of our programmes.

2. I also decided to significantly invest in the development of tools to allow the OIE to better respond to future health challenges, and, more specifically, to invest in the development of platforms that allow for a more sophisticated analysis of the health information that we collect. The redevelopment of the OIE-WAHIS information system and the project to create the Observatory for monitoring the implementation of OIE standards are two representative examples. You were partners – you are always partners – in these projects through a particular governance system I wanted, given the challenges that these projects represent for the Organisation. Whether it is through the Council, advisory committees or user groups, you have a say. As stakeholders, you can develop these projects with us.

3. Finally, as promised, I initiated a reform of the internal governance of the OIE. It has not yet been completed because – just as for your own services – this requires time and resources. But I'd like to mention a few examples of what has been achieved so far: the process for electing members of the four Specialist Commissions has now been aligned with international practices and an evaluation of the performance of these Commissions has been carried out; we have drafted more robust procedures, such as the procedures for examining applications for the recognition of official disease status; and external evaluations of certain programmes have been carried out. I would also point out that the dynamics of the Regional Commissions have been significantly improved and the role of the Regional Core Groups has been strengthened, etc. The aim has always been to achieve greater transparency and to foster a greater sense of ownership of the Organisation amongst everyone.

Reviewing the achievements of the last few years is not the main purpose of my speech today, but I felt that this reminder was necessary, as it underlines the fact that my programme for the next 5 years is not idealistic or impractical, it is built on the tangible results that have been achieved since the beginning of my

current mandate, and I hope that this will enable you to make a positive assessment of my ability to lead the OIE.

Today, I am asking you to support my candidacy for a new mandate, and I have outlined the strategic plan that will serve as my new road map should you decide to vote for me.

You know the issues that I will pay particular attention to, so I am not going to repeat them here, as time is limited, but please know that I will do this whilst also encouraging a culture of openness and listening within the Organisation. I am committed to maintaining the momentum that has been created, to building on the results already achieved, and to ensuring that these results are sustained, whilst also continuing the process of modernisation that began in January 2016.

The credibility of the OIE has been strengthened because we have built a stronger and more transparent Organisation. You and our partners and investors continue to have confidence in us. I know how precious that is and I thank you for it. Building on the momentum already created, my ambition for the coming years is to contribute to the building of an OIE that is always influential, attractive and – I hope – recognised for its values.

As we approach the 100th anniversary of the creation of the OIE, I know that this ambition can become a reality.
