



**World Organisation
for Animal Health**
Founded in 1924

WOAH turns 100: online celebration

25 January 2024 – 12:00pm CET - Transcript

Opening remarks: Gerrit Beger – Head of the Communication Department, WOA

Esteemed guests, distinguished colleagues, animal health and welfare advocates, it's with great pleasure that we welcome you to the World Organisation for Animal Health's milestone 100 birthday celebration. We're thrilled to have you with us virtually as we honor and celebrate an extremely active, alert, and agile centenary jubilant with a rich long history and a bright dynamic future.

You all play an important role in the life of WOA, past and present, and we hope you will do so in the times ahead. The organization's human mosaic is so vibrant and diverse and you all have contributed to define what WOA is today.

Today's event will feature five notable speakers, each ready to share their unique perspectives on this special occasion. To accommodate our digital format, we've muted all participants except for our speakers to ensure a smooth experience.

Without further ado, it's my honor to introduce our esteemed Director-General, Dr. Monique Eloit. Dr. Eloit, we eagerly await your remarks—the stage is all yours.

Dr. Monique Eloit – Director General, WOA

From OIE to WOA: 100 years in the service of animal health.

What prospects in the face of tomorrow's global challenges?

Dear Delegates and friends of WOA,

Today we are meeting to celebrate an important event in the history of WOA, namely the 100th anniversary of its creation on 25 January 1924.

What a long way we have come since the 28 founding countries signed the International Agreement marking the start of its existence!

Today we shall be looking back over these past 100 years. The aim will be not simply to recall the key stages that have forged the identity of the Organisation but to draw lessons for the future, given that WOAHA is a major player of global sanitary governance and must ensure that it remains relevant in the long term.

I also believe that knowing and understanding our history is important in order to re-clarify the core principles of the Organisation in a changing world and build the future with a shared vision.

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At the start of the venture, the project was far more limited than what it is today. The aim was to reach agreement on coordinated action to fight the spread of animal diseases by trade.

Over the years, this historic mission has been enriched and the mandate broadened to include other activities.

It would of course take too long to recount a whole century of our existence. Today, I would simply like to look back at some of the key milestones in the history of WOAHA.

Well, it seems to me that we can distinguish 4 main phases in the construction and development of WOAHA.

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The 1st phase began with the creation of the OIE, as an Organisation focusing on animal diseases. Its mandate was confined to two objectives: firstly, publishing the sanitary information notified by its Members and, secondly, elaborating standards aimed at ensuring safer trade.

This mandate – which remains central today – was given further resonance in 1995 by being formally recognised in the WTO's SPS Agreement. The OIE thus became the technical reference Organisation on which the WTO could base its arbitration of trade disputes between countries.

This recognition also influenced the partnership policy of the OIE, which proceeded to sign cooperation agreements with numerous other organisations.

This expertise remains an essential basis for the Organisation, as managing sanitary information and elaborating standards are incontestably two fields in which WOAHA remains to this day the sole competent international organisation.

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The 2nd phase saw the diversification of the Organisation's fields of intervention, with the development of standards for aquatic animals, the broadening of scope to include animal welfare, and a foray into the wildlife sector.

Regarding aquatic animals, the first standards were published in 1968; several reference laboratories were added to the ones already existing for terrestrial animal diseases. Gradually over the years, our area of intervention was significantly expanded to include diseases of molluscs, crustaceans and amphibians.

Today, we have a coherent strategic approach that considers aquatic animal health in a holistic manner, but more needs to be done as this sector still does not receive the attention it deserves.

Regarding animal welfare, our commitment dates back to the beginning of the 2000s with the publication of the first standards and then the launch of regional strategies. Admittedly, this was a rather production-oriented approach but we have now managed to evolve towards a more welfare oriented approach.

Since 2017, we have in place a structured global strategy and we have established a Global Animal Welfare Forum to facilitate dialogue with the concerned stakeholders. Thus, over and above the standard-setting work, more general topics are discussed, such as the contribution of animal welfare to the Sustainable Development Goals or animal welfare economics.

Lastly, we are involved in wildlife health thanks to considerable effort to make a significant impact.

Our actions now take place within a *Wildlife Health Framework*. Several studies have been published; during the COVID-19 crisis, important recommendations were issued regarding trade in wildlife and wildlife surveillance; and the Organisation's interventions are duly noted at events organised by partners such as CITES, UICN, etc.

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Let's move on now to the 3rd phase of our history, marking another important change in the role the Organisation intends to play. In the 2000s, we complemented our disease- or theme-based approach with a more transversal involvement on behalf of the Veterinary Services.

A marvellous project was launched and today everyone knows about:

- our PVS Pathway;
- our programme of twinning between laboratories, between veterinary education establishments and between Veterinary Statutory Bodies;
- and the veterinary education guidelines.

These programmes have become pillars of the Organisation's mandate.

Since I was elected, I have endeavoured to make the Organisation more inclusive, and advocacy on behalf of the Veterinary Services solely by promoting the veterinary profession has now evolved to advocacy on behalf of all those professionals working on a daily basis for animal health, namely veterinary paraprofessionals and community animal health workers. Today, we are working to strengthen the entire workforce.

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A few words now on the 4th and last phase I have identified; it revolves around two strong ideas: (1) strengthening the Organisation's strategic approach to make the resulting actions more consistent, and (2) positioning the Organisation more strongly as a player at the intersection of critical global challenges, such as the One Health approach and the Sustainable Development Goals.

As I have already said, WOA's involvement is now more clearly defined through framework strategies, which are then broken down into operational activities: animal welfare – the fight against antimicrobial

resistance – aquatic animal health – the Wildlife Health Framework, as well as for some priority animal diseases (foot and mouth disease, peste des petits ruminants, rabies, African swine fever, avian influenza).

And let us not forget that these strategies are also intended to open the Organisation to sustainable and operational partnerships, beyond the strict limits of veterinarians' usual areas of intervention. As a matter of fact, I am convinced that WOAAH can, and even should, play a role in resolving critical global issues.

That is why, during my term of office, I have worked hard to ensure WOAAH's strong involvement within the Quadripartite and our presence at high-level events, thereby providing us with political visibility and legitimacy.

Position papers, statements or vision papers are already being published on topics such as livestock production, animal welfare, the use of growth promoters, etc. Tomorrow, we will need to make our voice more clearly heard in societal debates.

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Today, we are proud of our history. What lessons of the past can help us build the Organisation of tomorrow?

First and foremost, I wish to emphasise the importance of preserving our founding missions and the credibility they give WOAAH. To that end,

- We need to ensure the scientific excellence of the standards produced, hence the importance of the evaluation of our science system and relevant Basic Texts currently underway, aimed at ensuring they are on a par with international best practices;
- In addition to scientific excellence, we need to ensure the relevance of standards, from the process of deciding on the choice of subjects to be covered through to an analysis of the conditions in which they are applied thanks to the surveys conducted by the Observatory;
- For the data recorded by the WAHIS system, there is a need to optimise their value added and to supplement these sanitary data with socio-economic data, to inform decision-making and better prioritise needs.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are operating in a world that is complex and ever-changing. A world where the preservation of natural environments is a source of concern with the intensification of animal production; a world where mobilising the players remains a constant challenge.

Bearing that in mind, WOAAH's involvement will need to be strengthened, for example (1) by better identifying professional partners we can work with via innovative PPP projects, and (2) by further stimulating the creation of technical and scientific networks and their activities.

This should help WOAAH to express a clear position on topical issues, mindful of the need to consider animal health/the economy of animal production/the preservation of environments, within a perspective of sustainable development.

Lastly, I believe the future of the Organisation will involve a greater momentum of our regional strategies. To this end, we need you, the Members and partners of the Organisation, and I hope that the information

collected during PVS missions will help us to better identify your expectations and needs, thereby allowing more efficient deployment of our global strategies at a regional level and greater ownership of our activities at a national level.

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Ultimately, after 100 years of existence, I think we can all acknowledge that WOAAH has become:

- ➔ An Organisation that is concerned with all aspects of animal health, following a holistic approach.
- ➔ An Organisation whose voice is heard beyond its usual environment thanks to the expression of opinions and to partnerships that combine policy objectives and operational actions.
- ➔ An Organisation that is credible, allowing us to envisage exerting political influence at high-level international forums. We can thus hope that the negotiations underway at WHO on the future Pandemic Treaty will be an opportunity for WOAAH to be legally recognised as an important player in future global health governance, along similar lines to the WTO SPS Agreement.

Our Organisation has the strength to begin a new chapter in its history. And I thank you for helping us to write it.

Gerrit Beger – Head of the Communication Department, WOAAH

A heartfelt thank you to our Director-General for the compelling quick 100-year journey through WOAAH's history and current endeavors. Now, we turn our view also a bit more to the future with our Deputy Director General, Dr. Montserrat Arroyo. Montserrat, please share with us your remarks.

Dr. Montserrat Arroyo – Deputy Director General, WOAAH

Dear colleagues, ladies and gentlemen,

At WOAAH we have inherited a rich history, our DG has given us a short view of where we stand today. We have consistently navigated challenges and seized opportunities, which have taught us lessons that have served us in our past, our present and will serve us to keep crafting a tomorrow in which we keep being drivers of the world's sanitary governance, backed by this history and experience.

Anniversaries are always a good moment for reflection on our past and, importantly, what we expect for our future. After a century, the timeline of achievements and lessons learned from 100 years, it's certainly an opportunity to deep dive and ask ourselves what will be our ambition for addressing what lies ahead. Undoubtedly, we have a strong desire to see the Organisation persist in its mission to serve and support animal health and welfare.

Therefore, in the spirit of our 100th anniversary celebrations, we've dedicated space to explore the possible futures that WOAAH may encounter. In thinking about the future, the aims are to engage in

exploring, imaging, and designing emerging scenarios that will influence WOA's path. These possible futures help us think of the changes currently unfolding and anticipate the challenges and opportunities that will shape the landscape of animal health and welfare in the years to come.

WOA's future will be shaped by decisions, actions, and responses to both present and emerging challenges and opportunities. How these will take form will depend on how we prepare, how we plan and how we engage. That's why we accentuate our commitment to featuring the future prominently in our 100th-anniversary celebrations, through our participatory foresight project initiated in July 2023.

This Foresight project, which involved several futures-thinking methods, has allowed a broad range of participants to share their insights on opportunities and disruptions impacting the animal health and welfare space. These insights were then used to craft storylines depicting possible futures, and strategies were developed to adapt, mitigate, and thrive in the face of these potential scenarios.

The workshops recently concluded and the outcomes will be published, highlighting key changes directly and indirectly impacting animal health and welfare.

Additionally, we will present five scenarios portraying different futures that WOA and its members could face. As an Organisation, these foresight scenarios built in a participatory manner will provide outputs that will be integral in stress-testing recommendations for the review of WOA's foundational texts during the General Session this May.

Change is happening rapidly, we are no longer the same Organisation compared to a 100 years ago. We have different challenges, different drivers and different demands from our society to improve animal health and welfare, this requires us to go beyond our technical standards and strategies.

We live with uncertainty around how current and emerging changes may unfold, accompanied by novel and unforeseen consequences that might disrupt the status quo. And because of this we need to plan, prepare, adapt and respond to the best of our availabilities, fortunately we already have three good ingredients to support us experience, tools and willingness to do always better.

As mentioned earlier, through the foresight project participants imagined how some of uncertainties or changes may unfold over time through the creation of five foresight scenarios. They applied a strategy generating approach to consider how to respond to those challenges and opportunities. Of course, the scenarios are just that...a means of thinking about and thinking through uncertain futures.

No one, and no method, can reliably predict precisely how the future will unfold. Yet, within this uncertainty, there's ample room to explore the complex, interconnected variables influencing animal health and welfare. It's an opportunity to adopt a more anticipatory approach, supporting the development of possible strategies and responses.

Should these strategies incorporate more disciplines? Should it change the way we communicate so that the Organisation is more involved in the in the public discourse with regards to animal health?. Or the take steps to support the next generations of veterinarians and animal health experts to navigate and leverage uncertainty in the domain of animal health and welfare? There's a myriad of possibilities to explore, always keeping our founding mission at its centre.

In essence, the future of WOA lies in our hands and those of the generations to come— today we are ready to create, shape, and influence through our decisions and actions, in the face of challenges and

opportunities, this new chapter in WOA's history. As we celebrate our 100th anniversary, let us embark on this journey of using foresight to foster futures thinking for resilience and strengthen our commitment to advancing the health and welfare of animals worldwide.

Thank you.

Gerrit Beger – Head of the Communication Department, WOA

Montserrat, your forward-looking remarks are much appreciated, offering a window into the future for WOA. By the way, these insights set the stage for several activities for the year and especially beyond.

It's now my pleasure to welcome Dr. Fajur Sabah Al Salloom, the esteemed Director for Animal Health from the Ministry of Municipalities Affairs and Agriculture in the Kingdom of Bahrain. Not only is she our valued WOA delegate and a member of the Council, but she also brings a wealth of knowledge and experience to our gathering. Dr. Al Salloom, we're honored by your presence—the floor is yours.

Dr Fajur Sabah Al Salloom - WOA Delegate for Bahrain

Good day to you all! I welcome you all to this momentous day celebrating this organization's 100th anniversary. It's a great pleasure of mine to be given the spotlight and to share a few words about the WOA.

Dating back to the 25th of January 1924, an international agreement was formed between 28 Member States with the intention of fighting animal diseases at a global level – and for the next century it did exactly that.

Now with 183 Member States, the WOA has successfully created an environment for which communication and collaboration between nations can be done with ease – where delegates are encouraged to share their information by coordinating responses to propel the cause against animal infectious diseases.

On a personal note, I have been the nominated Delegate of Bahrain since 2017, where among other things, we were able to strengthen our country's veterinary services by providing us with a domain to work on the control transboundary animal diseases, disease notification and official status recognition procedures. Where one of the best achievements being exemplified with the eradication of the first animal disease, Rinderpest, which is highly contagious with 100% death rate in some herds and had a long history of economic disruption. This success is owed to the WOA's mission to minimise global challenges within animal health through these international initiatives and collaborative efforts, with much of it owed to the high level of expertise provided.

Today, I stand and have full confidence in what the organization has accomplished because we all contributed greatly and effectively to these achievements, even if the organization's distinctive policy of partnership and transparency for all its activities, plans, agreements, treaties, or cooperatives was a vote for all countries. All of these matters have a major role that the organization is keen on, no matter how large it is, or how small the role of these countries in the organization, as there is equality, transparency, and democracy in decision-making, so it is deemed successful and efficient.

The organization's work throughout these years was not just limited to developing plans to combat animal diseases or developing provisions and guidelines to facilitate the safety, security, animal welfare and well-being of transporting animals around the world, which contributed to the economic stability and development of producing countries. Rather, its role extended to more than that, which is one health, as animal health is considered a fundamental focus of the approach. One health as well as food security. Therefore, we find that the organization has sought over all these years to develop it, keep pace with global developments in sustainability, and continue to perform its role to the fullest.

Animal health is the heart of our being – it is a pre-requisite to ensure food safety and public health – this goes to show the fundamental piece the WOAHA presides as an organisation. Here's to another 100 years.

Gerrit Beger – Head of the Communication Department, WOAHA

We're truly grateful for your valuable perspective and contributions today, Dr. Al Salloom. Thank you again.

Next, I'm delighted to introduce Dr. Debbie Eagles. As the Acting Director of CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness, a cornerstone of WOAHA's collaborative network, she joins us at an hour when most would be resting. Your dedication is inspiring, thank you for being with us—please proceed.

Dr. Debbie Eagles - Acting Director, CSIRO's Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP)

- Honour to speak at 100-year anniversary event and to represent perspectives of reference labs and collaborating centres
- 4 strengths of WOAHA I'd particularly like to highlight – collaborations & networks, best practice, One Health, trust and transparency
- Collaborations & networks
 - Foundational for sharing of knowledge, connections with experts/Ref Labs, build capability & sustainability
 - Examples: Asia-Pacific & ASF lab networks, SEACFFMD, Epi network; also for new and emerging diseases eg. TiLV ad Hoc group (international collaboration to confirm availability of robust diagnostic tests to enable listing of an emerging pathogen)
 - Build trust between individuals & countries, improve preparedness
 - Particular thanks to the regional offices who support & drive these networks and who play a strong role in advancing regional and animal health and welfare priorities
- Best practice
 - WOAHA promotes this through updating of Aquatic and Terrestrial Manuals and ad hoc guidance notes
 - Validation templates and guidance documents for test validation and proficiency test
 - Important that WOAHA continues to play this role in promoting best practice in disease surveillance, control, risk management

- One Health
 - Emerging and endemic zoonotic diseases are likely to provide a continued threat to global health in the short to medium-term future.
 - WOAHA represents veterinary services in One Health discussions internationally and provides guidance for One Health prevention, preparedness and response at national, regional and international level
 - Examples include response to influenza (also OFFLU), development of the Tripartite Guide to Addressing Zoonotic Diseases, One Health High-Level Expert Panel, input into WHO pandemic instrument, representation at G20
 - Sharing information on the incidence of zoonotic diseases across the human and animal health sectors holds some promise as a means for improving speed of detection. For this approach to work, human and animal health authorities must also develop experience in interpreting surveillance data since surveillance intensity will vary markedly by sector. Both the WHO and WOAHA could play a key role in this, by first identifying specific zoonotic diseases to be used as initial case studies (e.g. rabies), and then showcasing particular countries and time frames where shared surveillance data have resulted in better human and animal health decision-making.
- Trust & transparency
 - Build on 100 years of experience in facilitating and growing safe trade
 - Important in an era when elements of community have growing mistrust of science, also with global political instability
 - Importance of keeping apolitical, independent, science based, best practice
 - Built on timely reporting and sharing information (as supported by WAHIS)
 - Involvement in discussions of emerging technologies in relation to dual use

My 'wish' for WOAHA at 100 years

- Member participation will remain high
 - Election year for DG, Specialist Commissions, Regional Commissions, and WOAHA Council. Ad hoc groups and WOAHA international standards consultations are additional avenues for participation.
- That collaborations with WOAHA will remain valued as they are currently. WOAHA collaborations are highly respected for their collaborative/inclusive approach. Working with WOAHA on a project will always ensure it is held in high esteem and outcomes consider all of those involved in equal measure. Hope for the same into the future

Gerrit Beger – Head of the Communication Department, WOAHA

Thank you Debbie, your remarks have been a testament to the critical work carried out by our collaborating centers and network. Your contributions to the success of WOAHA are invaluable.

Finally, it's with great excitement that we welcome Dr. Moetapele Letshwenyo. Our Sub-Regional Representative for Southern Africa, Dr. Letshwenyo brings a unique regional perspective that enriches our organization. Dr. Letshwenyo, we're eager to hear from you—please take the stage.

Dr. Moetapele Letshwenyo, WOAHA Sub-Regional Representative for Southern Africa

I greet you all today, at this momentous occasion of celebrating WOAHA centenary!! It is the perfect moment to reflect on a century of unwavering commitment to global animal health. Looking back, one can but wonder how movement and trade of animals and their products was like before 1924, when WOAHA formerly known as OIE was established and took the centre stage of standard setting in animal health! Animal movements would have been based on unilateral or at best bilateral agreements based on friendship and/or historical ties between countries, other than disease control. We heard stories of animals being transported in ships across the globe and spreading disease pathogens in the process.

Ladies and Gentlemen;

Since its creation, WOAHA has countless achievements, and has positioned itself as an efficient and effective organisation that does a lot with minimal resources. WOAHA has made big strides in animal health, thereby facilitating safe trade of animals and their products. Since inception and together with member countries, WOAHA has increased her scope to cover allied topics such as animal welfare for one, and broadened the scope of the definition of “animal”, to include aquaculture, apiculture and wildlife.

Key to its success, has been the development of science-based international standards that foremost ensure transparency in disease reporting and dissemination of animal health information. WOAHA Standards provides an objective and scientific platform accessible to all, for the regulation of animal disease control globally, to ensure consistency and equivalence. Free access to these standards is a great benefit to countries, especially those with limited resources.

The impact has been improved levels of disease control globally, to the extent that Rinderpest was eradicated in 2011 after 87 years since inception of WOAHA as we know it today. Another significant impact, is that some countries are disease free or have free zones – and official control programme, for a select number of diseases. As an example, in Southern Africa, an arid region and more suitable to animal than crop agriculture, countries have embraced WOAHA international standards to improve animal production; Consequently, 7/16 countries in this sub-region are free from 1 or more TADs or have free zones, while others have endorsed official control programme.

In addition to Standards setting WOAHA strategically works with VS, who are the dispensers of animal health services to improve the governance and quality of veterinary services. The Organisation works with veterinary faculties (VEE) and veterinary councils (VSB) to ensure veterinarians and VPPs are well trained and regulated. Currently we see more Universities making reference to WOAHA Day 1 competencies as they revise their curricula. This is particularly important in the training and regulation of VPPs who in Africa, are the majority in delivering veterinary services such as vaccination campaigns and disease surveillance; especially in remote and war-torn areas.

Further strengthening governance and quality of veterinary services, through programmes like PVS evaluation and Twinning. Targeted project support to some countries has also been carried out. Examples of this include support to development of National Action Plans for relevant diseases; the strengthening of Veterinary Services in Developing Countries (SVSDC), rabies control in Namibia; supporting capacities in several countries to combat AMR through strategic collaboration; strengthening national and regional early detection systems for zoonotic wildlife diseases (Ebo-Sursy) in Africa, among others!

With these actions, we hope to build a healthier world for animals and humans alike.

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

As personal testimony, my WOAHA experience, dates back to the late 1990s, as an epidemiologist in the VS of Botswana – specifically in the control and eradication of CBPP and FMD in northern Botswana; With my team, we learned that a good understanding and implementation of international standards is key to justifying the control and/or eradication of TADs, to Government and resource partners. The same can also be used to negotiate trade in animal and animal products. Historically, the country had large areas with undefined FMD status, and with the use of standards we managed to convert these into officially recognised free zones and started looking for markets for product from those areas. This success augured well with policy makers, and they allocated more resources to control diseases, to the present day (this is Botswana's business case to resource allocation to animal health). For me the climax to my experiences with WOAHA, was presenting and defending a dossier submitted for FMD freedom to a panel of experts from WOAHA - the FMD and Other Epizootics Commission (later SCAD) in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in 2004. The others were being nominated into the Ad Hoc Group on FMD evaluations (2006), and ultimately awarded WOAHA Meritorious honour at the general Session of 2013.

I feel very honoured to be finally working for this august Organisation (since 2014), and it continues to impress me, even as an insider now!

Director of Ceremonies, Ladies and Gentlemen;

In conclusion, WOAHA has come a long way and has impacted animal disease control and related topic positively, as elaborated above. The ongoing modernisation and digitalisation will prepare the Organisation to face new challenges of our era. Our vision for the future, is that WOAHA continues to be a Global Leading Organization for animal health, working together with key partner Organisations. I end this note with well wishes to WOAHA and its staff, a happy centenary!

Closing remarks: Gerrit Beger, Head of the Communication Department, WOAH

Thank you, Dr. Letshwenyo, for sharing your insights and regional perspective with us.

To all our speakers, your powerful contributions and well-wishes have truly elevated this gathering. And to all our attendees, your presence today is much valued. Special thanks and greetings also to the ongoing CVO meeting in Brussels from which many European Delegates are joining.

No doubt, there will be a host of activities unfolding in 2024 to mark this milestone, not to only celebrate, but more importantly also to look to the future and frame this as an opportunity to strongly advocate on animal health and welfare issues as well as for the veterinary workforce, globally.

Celebrate and drive change by connecting with us on our anniversary campaign:

- Whether you're a Twitter or X enthusiast, a LinkedIn professional, an Instagram visualist, or a Facebook friend, follow us and use the hashtag #WOAH100.
- Come visit our newly created anniversary webpage, easily accessible from our main site WOAHA.org and share your birthday wishes on our webpage—there's a dedicated space just for them.
- Your voice matters to us—reach out at any time with your thoughts, questions, or suggestions at anniversary@woah.org.

Thank you again for your unwavering support. Let's make this anniversary a proud moment of WOAHA's history. Bye for now...