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**Director General's Report  
on 2023 WOAHA Activities**

*Administrative Working Document*



# TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>FOREWORD</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SEVENTH STRATEGIC PLAN IN 2023</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.1. Introduction</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.2 High-Profile Initiatives</b>	<b>5</b>
<b>1.3 Monitoring of action cards</b>	<b>7</b>
<b>1.4 Transregional Initiatives (TRIs)</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>2. OVERVIEW OF TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>2.1. Information management</b>	<b>9</b>
2.1.1 Animal health information	9
2.1.2 Publications	13
2.1.3. Documentation	16
2.1.4. Data governance	17
2.1.5. Global Burden of Animal Diseases	19
<b>2.2. Standard setting and implementation</b>	<b>20</b>
2.2.1 Overview of the standard-setting process	20
2.2.2 Activities of the Specialist Commissions and Groups	21
2.2.2.1 Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission	21
2.2.2.2 Biological Standards Commission	23
2.2.2.3 Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases	23
2.2.2.4. Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission	24
2.2.2.5 Activities of the Working Groups	25
2.2.3 Status	27
2.2.3.1 Applications for the official recognition of animal health status	27
2.2.3.2 Annual reconfirmations	27
2.2.3.3 Development of the Disease Status Management Platform	28
2.2.3.4 Self-declarations	28
2.2.4 Observatory	29
2.2.5 Foresight	31
<b>2.3. Capacity building</b>	<b>31</b>
2.3.1 PVS Pathway	32
2.3.2 Twinning Projects	37
2.3.3 Platform for the training of Veterinary Services	37
2.3.4 Sustainable laboratories	38
<b>2.4. Global frameworks</b>	<b>39</b>
2.4.1 One Health	39
2.4.1.1 Strategic global context	39
2.4.1.2 Strategic OH context at regional and sub-regional level	44
2.4.1.3 Antimicrobial resistance	45
2.4.1.4 Rabies	51
2.4.1.5 Tuberculosis	54
2.4.1.6 Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)	54
2.4.1.7 Emerging diseases	55
2.4.1.8 Wildlife health	55
2.4.2 Transboundary animal diseases	58
2.4.2.1 Strategic global context	58
2.4.2.2 Avian influenza	60
2.4.2.3 African swine fever	62
2.4.2.4 Foot and mouth disease	64
2.4.2.5 Peste des petits ruminants	66

2.4.2.6	Lumpy skin disease	67
2.4.2.7	Rinderpest post-eradication	68
2.4.2.8	Registration of diagnostic kits	68
2.4.3	Animal welfare	69
2.4.4	Aquatic animal health	70
2.4.5	Emergency management and preparedness	71
<b>2.5.</b>	<b>International collaboration</b>	<b>72</b>
2.5.1	Scientific networks	72
2.5.1.1	Science System	72
2.5.1.2	Collaborating Centres	73
2.5.1.3	Reference Laboratories	73
2.5.1.4	STAR-IDAZ	74
2.5.2	Other networks	75
2.5.3	Technical Partnerships	76
<b>3.</b>	<b>OVERVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES</b>	<b>79</b>
<b>3.1.</b>	<b>Institutional Governance</b>	<b>79</b>
3.1.1	Activities of the statutory bodies	79
3.1.1.1	World Assembly of Delegates	79
3.1.1.2	Council	80
3.1.1.3	Regional Commissions	80
3.1.2	Activities of the Regional Core Groups	81
3.1.3	Relationships with Members	82
3.1.4	Agreements	82
3.1.5	Analysis and evaluation of WOAHA's institutional, technical, and financial governance	82
<b>3.2.</b>	<b>General Administration</b>	<b>83</b>
3.2.1	Human Resources	83
3.2.2	Gender	85
3.2.3	General Services	86
3.2.4	Information systems	87
3.2.5	Coordination of events	87
3.2.6	Communication	88
3.2.7	Advocacy	89
3.2.8	Legal affairs	90
3.2.9	Performance management	90
3.2.9.1	Performance management	91
3.2.9.2	Internal control	91
3.2.10	Regional and Sub-Regional Representation business model	91
<b>3.3.</b>	<b>Financial management</b>	<b>92</b>
3.3.1	Budget and financial management	92
3.3.2	Budget funding and implementation in 2023	92
3.3.3	2024 and 2025 Budget planning and implementation	93
3.3.4	Procurement	94

## FOREWORD

The year 2023 marks a turning point in the history of the Organisation on the eve of celebrating the 100th anniversary of its foundation. Whereas the original aim of the founding countries was to agree “*joint action on the sanitary policing of contagious diseases of animals, as each country must be concerned not only with the sanitary situation of its immediate neighbours but also with that of the whole world*”, WOAAH is now at an important stage of reflection about its future.

Indeed, the COVID-19 pandemic, the silent pandemic of antimicrobial resistance and various other global issues, such as the globalisation of trade, the sustainability of production systems and the environmental and climate crisis, are leading the Organisation to ask itself about the limits of its mandate and about the way it functions.

During the last few years, a considerable amount of work has been done within the framework of implementing the Seventh Strategic Plan; a wide range of programmes and associated tools have been developed:

- standards, guidelines and recommendations;
- strategies that plot a course on key topics (rabies, avian influenza, peste des petits ruminants, aquatic animal health, combating antimicrobial resistance, animal welfare, etc.), and can inspire Members to implement them at national level;
- capacity-building programmes (PVS) to help Members improve the competencies and resilience of their national Veterinary Services.

However, in light of the delays that occurred during the COVID-19 pandemic, I shall be proposing that the Assembly extend the implementation period of the Seventh Strategic Plan by one year (i.e. until 2026). This will allow the new Directorate General to have more complete results for preparing the Eighth Strategic Plan.

Over and above all the scientific and technical work detailed in this report, we have enjoyed a far greater presence on the political scene. Our strong engagement in such demanding partnerships as the Quadripartite opens new horizons for us, beyond the limits of the Veterinary Services’ traditional areas of intervention. This broader positioning stems from a conviction that WOAAH, can, and indeed must, play a role in resolving critical global challenges. The adoption of a pandemic prevention, preparedness and response accord could provide legal endorsement of the legitimacy of our Organisation.

All these developments have helped to raise the profile of the Organisation. This momentum must, however, be rooted in solid foundations and be maintained in line with a vision shared with the Members: the guiding principles of 1924 must be examined in light of the challenges that lie ahead, and the operating rules must be placed on a more secure footing to minimise the institutional and financial risks.

The year 2023 will thus have marked the start of a reflection of major importance for the future of the Organisation, namely the revision of the Basic Texts. I hope that all Members will support this initiative by contributing to the work due to be launched based on the working document submitted to the Assembly (91 GS/Adm-13). WOAAH, proud of its 100 years, deserves the attention of its Members: this is a *sine qua non* condition for its credibility, efficiency and the trust placed in it to remain durably as its strengths.

Monique Eloit

# 1. IMPLEMENTATION OF THE SEVENTH STRATEGIC PLAN IN 2023

## 1.1. Introduction

To ensure the effective implementation of its Seventh Strategic Plan, WOAAH has adopted a monitoring methodology based on evaluating the level of progress in implementing Action Cards (ACs), High-Profile Initiatives (HPIs) and Transregional Initiatives (TRIs).

- High-Profile Initiatives (HPIs): introduced by the Executive Committee (COMEX) at the beginning of 2022, these flagship initiatives are aimed at accelerating the implementation of the Strategic Plan by means of projects with a high strategic impact.
- Action Cards (ACs): developed from 2021 by each of WOAAH's Departments, they represent the operational translation of the strategic objectives into specific actions, allowing results-oriented monitoring of progress.
- Transregional Initiatives (TRIs): introduced at the end of 2022 in collaboration with the Regions to strengthen their involvement in executing the Strategic Plan, they promote collaboration between different Regions, ensuring consistency and synergy in pursuing the Organisation's global strategic objectives.

The level of progress for each Action Card, High-Profile Initiative and Transregional Initiative is measured using a mixed approach, combining quantitative and qualitative analyses, directly reflecting their contribution to achieving the strategic objectives.

This system ensures a clear evaluation and continuous monitoring of the progress made with applying the Seventh Strategic Plan, in a spirit of constant improvement.

## 1.2 High-Profile Initiatives

COMEX identified 14 HPIs for implementation in 2023. The average level of completion for these HPIs was 67% in 2023 (compared to 60% in 2022). Table 1 shows the level of completion by HPI and by strategic objective. This result is encouraging given the complex nature of the tasks involved and the transversal nature of these initiatives.

Details of each of these HPIs are provided in this activity report.

Significant results were obtained on HPIs. These were aligned:

- **with objective SO1:** WOAAH demonstrated a proactive, resolute approach to improving animal health surveillance practices, with notable progress in the control of animal diseases and the capacity to respond rapidly to epidemics. These results highlight the constant efforts and integrated approaches needed to overcome the obstacles and improve animal health at a global level.
- **with objective SO3:** with the successful development of new e-learning modules and the completion of a dissemination strategy, WOAAH demonstrated its commitment to training and professional development through the increase in PVS activities, thus emphasising its essential role in the improvement of veterinary health systems.
- **with objective SO4:** WOAAH made considerable progress in terms of advocacy. Every effort was made to disseminate WOAAH's position on key issues and adopt a proactive approach to the preparation of future events.
- **with objective SO5:** WOAAH drafted a revised financial management framework, coupled with a new budget tool to improve budget planning and execution at Headquarters and, for the time being, in two regional offices. This key initiative strengthened the financial transparency and effectiveness of governance. Furthermore, in 2023, the process of revising WOAAH's Basic Texts was initiated, with the external support of a consortium of experts. This work resulted in a report making recommendations for improving the governance of WOAAH, to be discussed at the 91st General Session.

Regarding objective SO2, in spite of the challenges it faced, WOAHA adopted a proactive approach and learned important lessons on data management. The initiative of an external consultation, launched in 2023, is seen as a valuable opportunity to strengthen the Organisation's capacities and speed up its digital transformation.

**Table 1. Level of completion, by HPI and by Strategic Objective**

<b>High-profile initiatives</b>	<b>% level of completion</b>
<b>SO1: Scientific expertise – leveraging relevant scientific expertise to address multisectoral animal health and welfare issues</b>	
HPI-2023-6-Global diseases strategy implementation	<b>83%</b>
HPI-2022-9-Structuring science system	<b>90%</b>
HPI-2022-11-Aquatic animal health strategy implementation	<b>78%</b>
HPI-2022-12-Wildlife Framework evolution (human/animal interface focus)	<b>72%</b>
HPI-2023-13-WOAH incident management system structuring	<b>70%</b>
<b>SO2: Data governance – implementing digital transformation through a WOAHA Data Strategy</b>	
HPI-2022-1-Structuring data governance	49%
<b>SO3: Responding to Members' needs – driving a high level of support to WOAHA Members through standards and capacity building</b>	
HPI-2023-14-Capacity-building system strengthening	<b>88%</b>
<b>SO4: Collaboration with partners - optimising cooperation with partners to better respond to global challenges</b>	
HPI-2023-2-Establishment of an advocacy approach for the Organisation	<b>79%</b>
HPI-2023-8-One Health operationalisation	<b>73%</b>
HPI-2023-3- Structuring Partnership	40%
<b>SO5: Efficiency and agility – being recognised as an efficient and agile organisation underpinned by modern internal processes and tools</b>	
HPI-2022-4-Budget planning improvement (including procurement planning)	<b>73%</b>
HPI-2022-5-Consolidation/ control of key HR policies, processes and data	32%
HPI-2023-10-Basic Texts Review	<b>100%</b>
HPI-2023-7-Review of RR Manual of Procedures	15%
<b>Average level of completion</b>	<b>67%</b>

### 1.3 Monitoring of action cards

The Departments' action cards, deployed throughout the duration of the Seventh Strategic Plan, have shown good progress and are making an effective contribution to the achievement of the Strategic Plan's sub-objectives.

In 2023, WOAAH carried out several significant actions in key areas:

- Following the development of a system for monitoring the implementation of standards, WOAAH published its 2022 Observatory report in January 2023, while maintaining its analytical activities and improving the effectiveness of its standard-setting processes, using a standard operating procedure, and achieving 95% of the set objective.
- The verification process for all 'active' self-declarations was completed, thereby ensuring that the information declared by Members was up-to-date and relevant.
- Progress on target support initiatives for PPPs continued in line with the established plans, reflecting a proactive approach to collaboration between these two sectors.
- WOAAH consolidated its brand identity, extending its branding directives to platforms such as ANIMUSE and WAHIS, and centralising brand requests to achieve greater consistency.
- With a 75% level of completion, WOAAH has strengthened its editorial processes by adopting a new style guide, aimed at more effective and uniform communication, in particular as regards the new narrative developed during the change of visual identity.
- The Organisation also made progress on implementing its ethical standards, achieving 80% of the objective, with revised directives aimed at greater clarity and integrity in its activities.

**Table 2.** Action Cards: level of completion, by strategic sub-objective

Action Cards	% level of completion
SO1a: Reinforce the scientific excellence of WOAAH	63%
SO1b: Broaden WOAAH's approach to animal health systems	43%
SO2b: Improve accessibility and visibility of data for stakeholders' uses	75%
SO3a: Develop the monitoring of standards implementation	74%
OBS 2 – 2021: Observatory analytical reports	100%
SCIENCE 2 – 2021: Improving process efficiency for standards and guidelines	95%
SO3c: Leverage the WOAAH network to maximise the delivery of support to Members	46%
STAT 11 – 2022: Follow Up - Update procedure for self-declared freedoms (STAT7 - 2021)	95%
SO4b: Target collaboration for impact	100%
CBD 4 – 2021: Recommendations for PPP targeted support	100%

Action Cards	% level of completion
SO4c: Further promote the added value of WOH as a partner	98%
COMM 1 – 2021: Create and position a new visual brand and master narrative for the Organisation globally to align with the challenges as outlined in the Seventh Strategic Plan	95%
SO5a: Optimise performance and results-based management	75%
PUB 2- 2021 Creating standard global set of editorial style guidelines for WOH	100%
PUB 3- 2021 Enhancing internal publications process	75%
SO5b: Review the business model of the Regional Representations	58%
SO5d: Promote WOH's social and environmental responsibility	90%
LEGAL 6 – 2021: Ethical standards	80%
<b>Average level of completion</b>	<b>68%</b>

#### 1.4 Transregional Initiatives (TRIs)

Implementation of the Strategic Plan also relies heavily on the active commitment of the Regions. Since the launch of the Strategic Plan, the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations have played a key role in supporting its implementation, not only by being actively involved in several HPIs and ACs, but also through the development of specific transregional initiatives.

A major objective of these TRIs is to harmonise work and collaboration at regional level with our governance bodies and with key partners, including our Reference Centres.

In 2023, WOH achieved a significant level of harmonisation of approaches within the regional Quadripartite secretariats, with a notable success in the collection, analysis and validation of harmonised approaches, achieving 100% of the objectives in these areas; these approaches are due to be shared with the global Secretariat in 2024, when WOH takes charge of this Secretariat. Furthermore, harmonisation of the implementation of the Regional Core Group concept made good progress (80% completed), with the inclusion of Terms of Reference to improve communication and coordination of the regional governance bodies. The compilation of key information for the harmonisation of GF-TADs secretariat processes at regional level has also been completed.

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## 2. OVERVIEW OF TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES

### 2.1. Information management

#### 2.1.1 Animal health information

##### World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) platform activities

During 2023, WOAHA strengthened its capacity and capability to gather important disease information from Members and non-Members by evolving the WAHIS platform and consolidating relationships with reporting and consulting users.

Improving the Early Warning module of WAHIS was prioritised to facilitate reporting by its users. This work was completed in September 2023 and positive feedback was received from both reporting and consulting users on the improved functionalities. The release notes on the newly launched functionalities and improvements were shared with Delegates and Focal Points (**28 Feb:** [\[EN / FR / SP\]](#); **27 Apr:** [\[EN / FR / SP\]](#); **29 Sept:** [\[EN / FR / SP\]](#)).

These improvements facilitated the verification and validation process by the staff of the World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department (WAHIAD), thereby speeding up the publishing of immediate notifications and follow-up reports. This was important, as the number of Early Warning notifications remained at a very high level. By the end of December 2023, a total of 474 immediate notifications and 2578 follow-up reports had been received (excluding 'no evolution' follow-up reports and reports without quantitative data).

The information technology (IT) infrastructure was upgraded to ensure that the platform functionalities remained aligned with the latest IT and security requirements. These upgrades will also facilitate future IT developments.

Work started in July 2023 to optimise the Six-Monthly Reporting (SMR) module following a similar approach to that taken for the Early Warning module. The new SMR module should be available for users by the second quarter of 2024. Additionally, development of the first phase of the Annual Reporting (AR) module started in October 2023 following a similar timeline. The AR module will include an Animal Population and Biomass section.

Analysis of feedback on the poor performance of the analytics (dashboard) module resulted in the application of a combination of technical and hardware solutions that have largely resolved the performance issues.

##### Support for WAHIS reporting and consulting users

For the platform to be successful, it is important that national Veterinary Services can report easily, and that the data can be consulted and used, adding value to their activities. User support is essential to promote the value of the platform, build user engagement and enhance reporting transparency.

Support for reporting and consulting users continued via the dedicated [WAHIS Support Desk \(woah.org\)](#). In 2023, the Support Desk was enhanced by adding a Service request section offering: one-to-one training for Focal Points; access to data extractions; demonstration sessions on how to get the best value from data in the system; dedicated mapping extractions; and updates of mapping shapefiles.

At the 90th General Session in May 2023, WOAHA delivered 46 in-person one-to-one training sessions to Delegates and Focal Points from the five WOAHA Regions (Africa: 25 sessions; Americas: 5; Asia and the Pacific: 2; Europe: 13; Middle East: 1). Topics covered were: Early Warning reporting: 19 sessions; Six-Monthly reporting: 15; the WAHIS public interface and mapping and dashboards: 12.

Between 1 January 2023 and 3 December 2023, WOAAH delivered 65 virtual one-to-one training sessions to Delegates and Focal Points of four of the five WOAAH Regions (Africa: 17 sessions; Americas: 13; Asia and the Pacific: 24; Europe: 11). Topics covered were: Six-Monthly reporting: 28 sessions; periodical Early Warning extraction: 17; Early Warning reporting: 12; the WAHIS public interface, mapping and dashboards: 8. Virtual training sessions for the Middle East Region will be addressed in 2024.

To support WOAAH Members and non-Members in maintaining global transparency and reporting of diseases of animal and public health importance, WOAAH conducted a disease notification training course in Chiba (Japan) from 21 to 23 June 2023. The course was attended by 47 participants and three observers from the Asia and the Pacific region. Through the training, WOAAH:

- encouraged Focal Points to be important stewards in their respective countries/territories with respect to disease reporting;
- updated Focal Points on disease reporting requirements and the nature of the information required when using the WAHIS application, as well as on how to appropriately consult the system;
- encouraged Focal Points to interact with each other and WOAAH staff, to improve disease notifications across the region;
- supported the Focal Points in building and participating in networks at national, sub-regional, regional and global levels;
- trained Focal Points on the latest methods for reporting disease information at Member level using the WAHIS platform;
- confirmed Focal Points' understanding of their roles and responsibilities in terms of disease reporting to WOAAH.

As a result of the training course, the number of six-monthly reports submitted from the Asia and the Pacific Region in the first six months of 2023 (57) was almost matched within the first two months after the course (51 six-monthly reports submitted in July and August).

### **Interconnection with other systems and the global health community**

Public interoperability remains a priority for WOAAH as a deliverable of the digital strategy. WOAAH continues to explore the best way to achieve this and to give access to data from WAHIS and a various other WOAAH databases.

Interconnection of WAHIS with the European Union (EU) Animal Disease Information System (ADIS) is anticipated in early 2024 with five countries as a pilot, and it will gradually expand to all countries that currently report in both ADIS and WAHIS. Interconnection between the two systems will enable one-portal reporting and will be an important milestone and proof of concept. For further information please consult [Unveiling ADIS, the EU Animal Disease Information System and its link to WAHIS](#).

### **Use of WAHIS data to add value for Members**

Data and information gathered in WAHIS enables and empowers users to make evidence-based analysis and decisions related to important animal diseases. WOAAH continues to facilitate adding value to these data in a variety of ways.

Situation reports providing an update at global and regional levels are prepared periodically, from information submitted by countries through WAHIS, for [high pathogenicity avian influenza \(HPAI\)](#), [African swine fever](#) (ASF) and [listed diseases of wildlife](#).

In 2023, the regional animal health situation was presented at two Conferences of WOAAH Regional Commissions. In addition, 10 presentations were delivered at different venues (virtual

or on-site meetings) regarding the animal health situation of diseases of interest, notification requirements of WOAHA Members and use of the WAHIS platform.

On numerous occasions throughout the year, WOAHA staff at Headquarters and Regional and Sub-Regional Representations were provided with support in the form of extractions of data from WAHIS and the interpretation and preparation of descriptive statistics and visuals.

Periodical data extractions of the validated Early Warning reports have been made available to reporting and consulting users via an external, secure SharePoint site to bridge the need to gain access to large amounts of data. Additional quality procedures have been implemented to secure data quality. Making these data available is important to enable users to make risk-based decisions.

### **Active search activities**

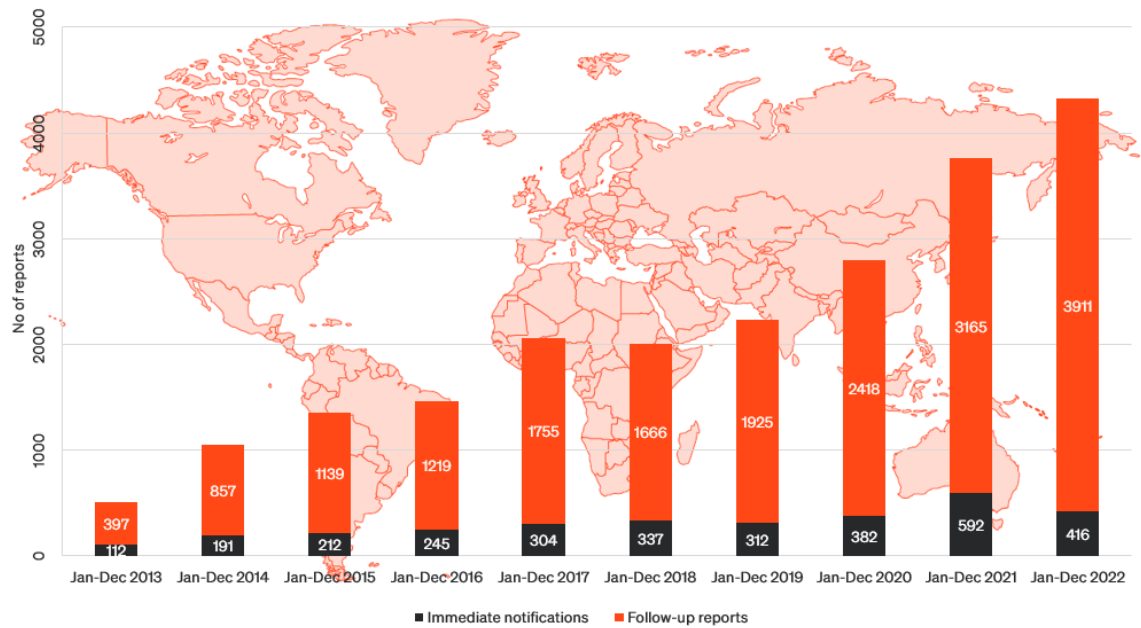
WOAHA actively tracks disease rumours on the internet using the Epidemic Intelligence from Open Sources platform (EIOS) and circulates a summary digest to internal (i.e. WOAHA staff) and external stakeholders three times weekly. This digest plays an important role in drawing attention to new and potentially emerging disease threats, as well as alerting WOAHA staff to outbreaks of listed diseases. This activity plays a direct role in fulfilling WOAHA's mission and vision of ensuring transparency from Members.

The number of disease rumours (signals) detected through EIOS increased by 9% compared to the previous year, with the capture of 186,000 signals in 2023. The influx of news related to monkeypox and avian influenza in mammals was largely responsible for this increase. Of the news items captured in 2023, 885 were identified as relevant to WOAHA and were verified, resulting in the submission of 59 immediate notifications and follow-up reports. Fifty-seven items were followed by the Tripartite Global Early Warning System (GLEWS+), which focuses on zoonotic diseases or unknown diseases. Lastly, 106 items were considered relevant to six-monthly reporting (i.e. those listed diseases usually reported through six-monthly reports). Identifying such news items supports the monitoring team by ensuring these diseases are reported in six-monthly reports and assisting Members with complying with the transparency mandate of WOAHA.

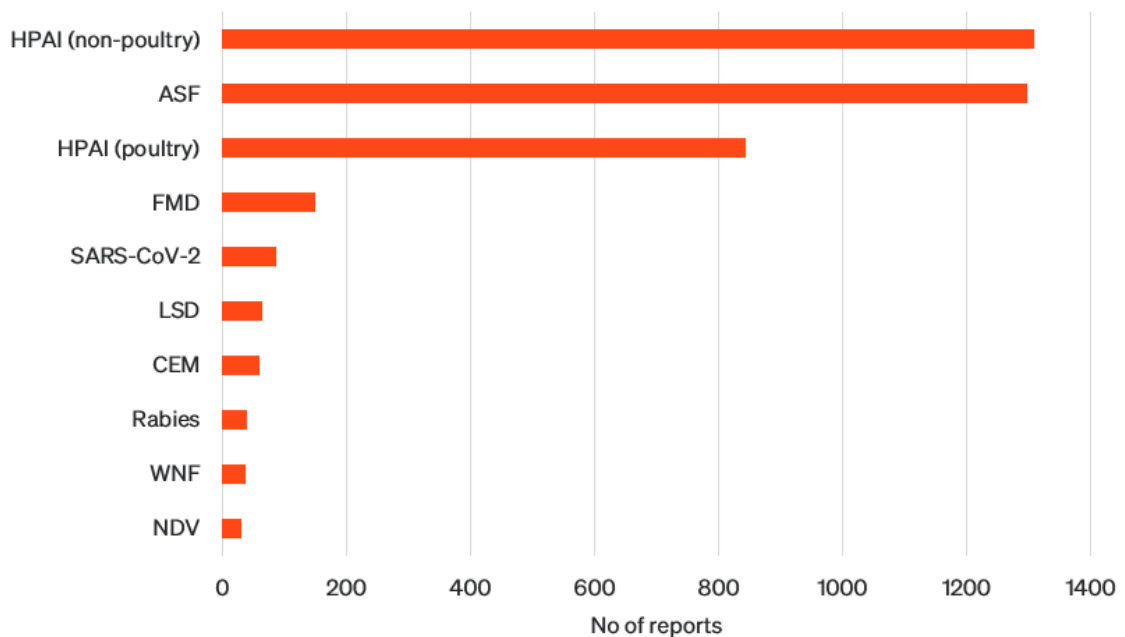
In 2023, the active rumour tracking activity expanded to the Regional Representation and Sub-Regional Representation in the Asia and the Pacific Region. An Active Search Team (AST) was established in both the Tokyo and the Bangkok offices with the aim of enhancing disease-threat identification and improving the transparency performance of countries in the region. AST Asia has been trained in using EIOS and became officially active in December 2023.

### **Early warning activities**

The number of immediate notification and follow-up reports submitted to the WAHIS Early Warning module increased sharply between 2019 and 2022, with submissions in 2023 being slightly higher than the previous peak of 2022 (Fig. 1). From 2023 onwards, to facilitate comparisons between years and to ensure consistency with detailed Early Warning module data made publicly available, statistics from the Early Warning module (including the historical information presented in Fig. 1) are reported for those submissions that have quantitative information, thus excluding 'no evolution' reports and follow-up reports and final reports without quantitative data. In 2023, 111 Members submitted 474 immediate notifications and 2,578 follow-up reports relating to 46 different diseases and provided quantitative information for 15,827 outbreaks with start dates in 2023. The three most-reported diseases in 2023 were high pathogenicity avian influenza (HPAI) in non-poultry and wild birds, African swine fever (ASF) and HPAI in poultry (Fig. 2).



**Figure 1.** Trend in submission of immediate notifications and follow-up reports, 2013–2022



**Figure 2.** Top ten diseases reported by immediate notification or follow-up reports in 2023 (ASF: African swine fever; HPAI: high pathogenicity avian influenza; FMD: foot and mouth disease; LSD: lumpy skin disease; CEM: contagious equine metritis; WNF: West Nile fever)

### Monitoring activities

In 2023, 827 six-monthly reports (SMRs) from 153 countries were submitted, compared to 568 from 128 countries in 2022. Of the SMRs submitted in 2023, 197 related to 2023 (first semester), 354 related to 2022, 116 related to 2020, and the remainder (160) related to 2020 or earlier. A total of 841 SMRs were published in 2023 compared to 583 in 2022. These results are encouraging and demonstrate Members' commitment to transparency in reporting; they also reflect the improved efficiency and availability of business tools used within WAHIAD to process SMRs.

For 2024, the team is working towards ensuring that 1) 80% of SMRs are published within three months of submission, and 2) all SMRs are published within 12 months of submission. Achieving these targets is a realistic goal but only if our Members are equally committed and responsive to the team's efforts.

### **Codification activities**

In 2022, the electronic codes developed were made available internally to WOAAH staff, and an internal process for the maintenance of the relevant reference tables was developed during 2023 as well as a scoping exercise for the incorporation of these codes into WAHIS as part of the implementation project planned for 2024, which is another step towards facilitating the collection and sharing of animal health information between stakeholders.

### **Communication on WAHIS**

In 2023, WOAAH continued to work on the positioning of WAHIS as the global reference platform for publication of official data on animal diseases of epidemiological significance in both domestic and wild species.

To continue building the visibility of WAHIS beyond the Organisation's stakeholders, the latest immediate notifications are being shared on a regular basis through WOAAH's Twitter (X) account (a key social media platform with 320,000 followers). This initiative is well received by diverse audiences, increasing the visibility of WAHIS on social media by 31% as well as increasing the traffic from social media to the WAHIS platform by 39% compared to 2022. The main diseases covered through this initiative in 2023 were avian influenza, ASF, foot and mouth disease (FMD) and Newcastle disease. The disease that aroused the most audience interest was avian influenza, this being driven primarily by the outbreak in cats in Poland. The interest in Poland continued, further engaging the audience in the outbreak of SARS-CoV-2 there.

The initiative has become a regular activity and will continue to be implemented in 2024.

With the increasing focus on data, a communication initiative was started in the last quarter of 2023 to position the HPAI, ASF, wildlife and aquatic animal health situation reports as the reference for regular updates on key animal disease situations around the world. Primary and secondary audiences were identified, to ensure that audiences were maintained. In order to facilitate audience access to the information, dynamic summaries of the monthly HPAI and ASF reports were produced in the form of short video clips. The audience response was positive, reaching 19.4 million people, especially on Facebook and Instagram.

#### **2.1.2 Publications**

WOAH publications disseminate the Organisation's scientific knowledge, information on its international standards and news and reports from within the Organisation and on animal health globally. Their purpose is also to maximise the reach and impact of WOAAH's scientific and policy-related contributions to its mandate and to inform decision-making.

- Flagship publications

WOAH's flagship publications include **Panorama**, **WOAH News**, the **Newsfeed** and the bi-annual **Scientific and Technical Review**.

In 2023, the *Official* section of the former *Bulletin* was discontinued in favour of posting the institutional information it contained on the WOAAH website, by means of a landing page linking to resources that are updated regularly. Two thematic issues of *Panorama* were published: *Building Leadership in Veterinary Services* and *Improving Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare Worldwide*, and an editorial strategy was approved for a digital magazine format for *Panorama*, to be launched in autumn 2024. Ten issues of **WOAH News** were produced, including a special issue following the General Session.

The **Scientific and Technical Review** (the *Review*), WOAAH's peer-reviewed journal, saw an issue on Animal health data management published during the General Session in May 2023. A new Editorial Board for the *Review* was also established in 2023, with a clear mandate for its members, to ensure that the scientific rigour of the *Review* is maintained.

- *Ad hoc* and co-publications

WOAH also produces co-publications with its Tripartite and Quadripartite partners, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), and *ad hoc* publications prepared by WOAAH teams on specific topics.

In 2023, the following typologies were determined for WOAAH's *ad hoc* and co-publications:

**Table 3. List of Publication Typologies at WOAAH in 2023**

Typology	WOAH Description
<i>Panorama</i>	WOAH's trilingual digital magazine. It disseminates information, research findings and insights into the initiatives and activities the Organisation carries out in relation to its strategic objectives. It publishes articles, essays, editorials and reviews that examine WOAAH's strategic priorities in depth, providing readers with an overview of the Organisation's initiatives in its main areas of work and in relation to the challenges faced by society today. The publication's aim is to communicate transparently on WOAAH's strategic actions, while fostering dialogue on the potential to further advance these topics across the WOAAH network and beyond.
<i>WOAH News</i>	Newsletter developed in-house with short articles relating to the Organisation's strategies, initiatives and success stories. It relays news from the Organisation as well as from the network and partners, including Members' self-declarations of animal health status, news articles, scientific information, publications and more.
<i>In-house Times</i>	Thematic in-house newsletter with articles written by staff for staff, featuring interviews and information on organisational activities, policies, events, clubs, new resources, helpful tips and more.
<i>Newsfeed</i>	Organisational news and articles from our network that regularly get published, <i>ad hoc</i> , and pushed in issues of <i>WOAH News</i> .
<i>Scientific and Technical Review</i>	Periodical peer-reviewed publication featuring articles on the latest scientific and technical advances in animal health, veterinary public health, food safety and animal welfare worldwide. Each issue has a specific theme led by an expert coordinator, relevant to the Organisation's strategic priorities and recent developments in the area of animal health. In existence since 1982.
Guidelines	Compendia of standards and guidelines for the improvement of animal health, as well as international veterinary public health. Standardised approaches to disease diagnosis, etc. Often the outcome of workshops or working groups.
Books	<i>Ad hoc</i> thematic publications, print and digital, for internal and external readers. Includes animal health atlases, reference books, technical handbooks.
Books of Abstracts	Collections of scientific paper abstracts only, usually in conjunction with programmes for conferences, outlining the event objectives, organisational information, presentation and workshop outlines. For internal, Member and participant readers.
Conference Proceedings	Published booklets/compendia to record a WOAAH conference, congress or symposium, including principal academic themes, abstracts or reports of papers presented by participants. This includes recommendations for future actions based on the proceedings.
Meeting Reports	Summary of key WOAAH meetings, including minutes, agenda, results and future actions, participants, etc.



Training Materials	Manuals, workbooks or e-learning courses for educational purposes and further training, or summaries of training workshops.
Annual Reports	Summaries of key achievements and activities throughout the year of a particular programme, such as the Observatory, the Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Animal Diseases (GF-TADs), rabies or antimicrobial resistance (AMR), with success stories, current and future mission statements. Features impact of strategies (with data) and updates on technical advances.
Technical Reports	Summaries of recent thematic research findings and recommendations for processes, with details on methodology, progress and outcomes.
Policy Brief	Concise summary of strategy, contexts, rationales and practical steps, based on scientific findings, with acknowledgement of stakeholders (e.g. the One Health policy).
Playbook	Manuals outlining department/organisation policies, workflows and standard procedures across the animal health sector.

- Publication highlights in 2023

In 2023, WOAAH produced the following publications:

- [Review Vol. 42](#): Animal health data management
- [Panorama 2023-1](#): Building Leadership in Veterinary Services
- [Panorama 2023-2](#): Aquatic Animal Health and Welfare Worldwide
- 10 issues of *WOAH News* and 4 issues of *In-house Times*
- [Overview of the Futures Literacy Laboratory on ‘The Futures of Climate Responses, 2040’](#)
- *Global Rinderpest Action Plan, 2nd ed.*
- [WOAH Observatory Annual Report](#)
- Book of Abstracts (*Symposium international sur les maladies zoonotiques émergentes et ré-émergentes*)
- Guidelines for Targeted BSE Surveillance
- [Oral Vaccination of Dogs against Rabies \(Tripartite\)](#)
- *Practical Guidelines for National Procurement of Veterinary Vaccines.*

- Publications Strategy

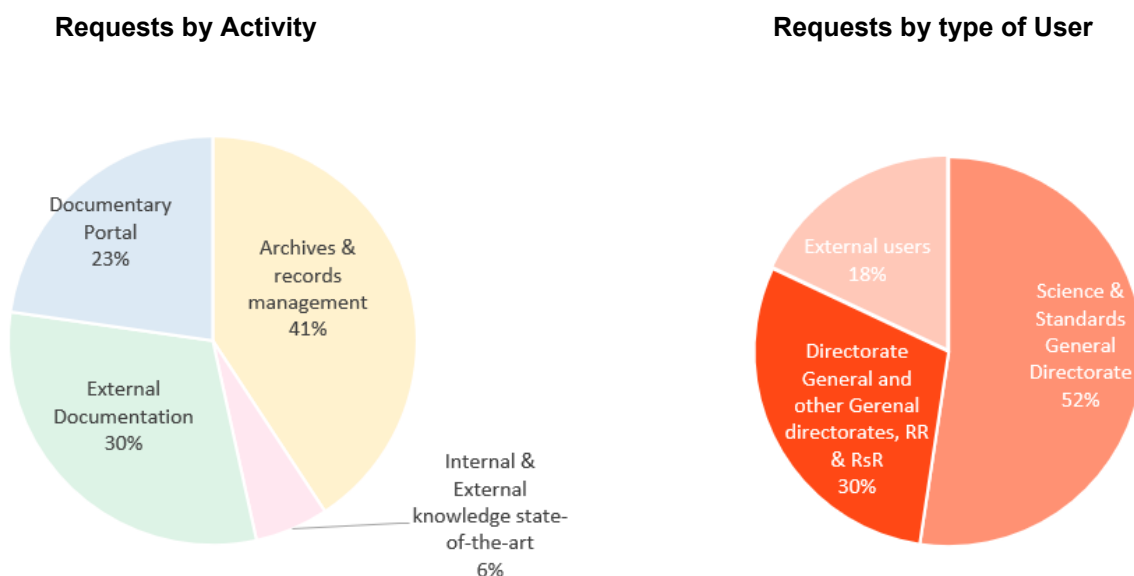
In line with the Publications Strategy approved in 2020, a roadmap was developed for 2023-24 to improve the efficiency of WOAAH’s publishing processes and ensure the quality and timeliness of its publications.

In 2023, a new editorial style guide, *WOAH Style*, was created with a view to harmonising and professionalising all written output across the Organisation and typologies were identified and defined to assist staff in the preparation of their publications and in determining the level of support/expertise required (see Table 1). A new Editorial Board was established to ensure the scientific integrity of the *Review* and the *Bulletin* was dissolved in favour of a more appropriate format to disseminate the content previously published in the *Official* section and a new editorial strategy for publishing *Panorama* as a digital magazine.

In 2024, a strategy for WOAAH staff publishing externally will be developed to ensure maximum reach and impact for the Organisation; workshops will be organised for staff to explain editorial processes, general writing principles and how to promote work post-publication; new hosting and readership tracking systems for publications will be explored and implemented for maximum visibility.

### 2.1.3. Documentation

WOAH Documentation plays a key role in facilitating reliable access to the accumulated internal and external information and knowledge for the benefit of both internal and external users (Veterinary Services, Reference Centres, experts, partners, etc.). The entire document management life cycle is covered, from collection, organisation, referencing, cataloguing, indexing, to dissemination and sharing, including secure archiving. Activities include the Library/Documentation Centre, the Documentary Portal and Archives & Records management.



**Figure 3.** Documentation activities and users: breakdown of the 189 requests processed in 2023

- WOAH Archives & Records management

A new activity dedicated to Archives & Records management was created at the beginning of 2023. With the support of an external consultancy, tools have been released, including retention schedules, a nomenclature, primary procedures and an archive database.

As the archiving process is part of a global, supervised approach designed to bring about a gradual change in practices, the priority is to get the departments/units on board by communicating procedures. Supporting the archives' points of contact is essential to lead disparate practices towards harmonisation and good document management practices.

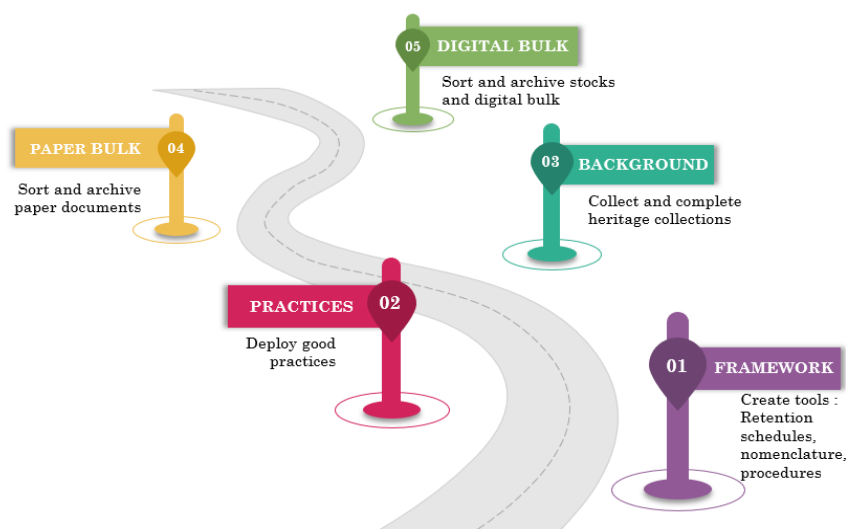
The collections of historical archives are currently being reviewed to ensure that they are part of the process and are both complete and valued as part of the Organisation's institutional memory. Syntheses on WOAH's history, its headquarters and works of art, and its history in the regions were released internally during the year to help prepare for the Organisation's Centenary.

Paper archives, which represented 1.2 linear kilometres at the end of 2022, were partially reviewed and inventoried and some archives that had reached the end of their life cycle were disposed of. Some paper archives will be outsourced, depending on their value.

With respect to electronic archives, two internal tools are currently in the design phase, one to manage electronic record deposits, consultations and disposals, and the other to secure and provide traceability for electronic binding of documents for future audits.

Thanks to the roadmap that has been put in place (Figure 4), the risks linked to inadequate archiving for the Organisation have been reduced.





**Figure 4. Archives and Records Management Roadmap**

- **Documentary Portal**

The [Documentary Portal](#) is the official, central, searchable, open-access, repository of WOAHP publications, scientific and technical outputs, institutional documents and other knowledge resources.

With an average of 5,000 unique users per day, and a peak of 19,647 unique users in November 2023, the Documentary Portal is reaching a growing audience. This is thanks to communication and user training, links from other WOAHP applications and websites and the external referencing of WOAHP publications in scientific databases, especially the *Scientific and Technical Review* articles (indexed in CAB Abstracts, VetMed Resource, PubMed/Medline, Elsevier Scopus and Clarivate Analytics Web of Science).

A user survey, launched in October 2023, resulted in a very satisfactory rating and led to suggestions for improving the service.

- **WOAHP Documentation Centre**

The WOAHP Documentation Centre, based at Headquarters, provides staff with access to external information and knowledge resources. Its internal physical and electronic catalogue of document collections is accessible through the Documentary Portal, and institutional online access to additional external scientific journals, e-books and databases is promoted through the Intranet.

In addition, the Centre's expertise in the field of scientific and technical information is called upon to conduct searches and undertake value-added evidence-based research and monitoring, such as literature and scoping reviews, benchmarks and knowledge state-of-the-art reviews.

In 2023, collaboration with the Science Department and the Publications Unit was strengthened in the field of external referencing and the online visibility of WOAHP publications, as well as the monitoring of WOAHP staff member's external publications and the publications of the Organisation's network of Reference Centres.

#### **2.1.4. Data governance**

Human resource constraints heavily impacted the implementation of the 2023 work plan regarding data governance. Reprioritisation of the activities allowed some of them to be initiated and/or finalised; a selection of these is highlighted below. To further support the Organisation with its digital transformation and its data management challenges, a consultancy was organised; it confirmed the assessment and prioritisations established by the Organisation and provided recommendations to build internal capacity and successfully proceed to the next phases.

- Data architecture

An architecture design to improve how WOAAH digests and shares data has been completed. The design will be reviewed to ensure its suitability in terms of cost, functionality and how it will support WOAAH's ambition to utilise new technologies such as artificial intelligence.

- Master data management

Well defined and properly managed master data are needed for all data-centred projects and activities. They are critical to WOAAH's operations, its digitalisation, and interoperability across datasets.

A policy document was developed to define WOAAH's master data and design its master data management policy. Datasets that are relevant to become master datasets were identified and prioritised; they are now in the process of being developed, maintained, updated and referenced in a consistent, uniform, transparent, continuous, accurate and documented manner.

One of the master datasets prioritised was the list of animal diseases within the scope of WOAAH. Based on prior work on disease codification, a draft master dataset of listed and emerging diseases within the scope of WOAAH and with relevant key attributes was created, covering the period from 2005 to 2023; a draft procedure was developed to describe and standardise the rules for its maintenance. At the end of 2023, internal consultation on the master dataset and procedure was still in progress. Once agreed across the Organisation, this master dataset will be processed into a dedicated tool and shared within WOAAH and with external partners. In 2024 and subsequent years, this master dataset will be enriched with other diseases within the scope of WOAAH, as well as with additional disease attributes.

WOAH Members and partners will have access to this master dataset and could use it to facilitate animal disease reporting, gain a better understanding of WOAAH data and cross-reference WAHIS or WOAAH data with other datasets for easier and more comprehensive analysis.

The development of a master dataset on countries, territories and WOAAH regions will be prioritised during first semester 2024.

- Process for data verification, sharing workflow, publication

WOAH also worked to improve the deployment, content management and distribution of all WOAAH datasets and data reports internally and, when relevant, externally. Microsoft PowerBI Service was selected as the tool to share data reports and datasets.

The mechanism for governing the deployment, content management and distribution of all WOAAH datasets internally and externally was described and was accompanied by a checklist summarising the steps to be undertaken by the different actors during this process. The process and tool were piloted. Several datasets were made available across the Organisation in an effort to better integrate data and enrich data analysis. A total of 17 PowerBI reports and datasets were published on the WOAAH website and are now available to all (including [12 Observatory dashboards](#) monitoring the implementation of WOAAH standards and [3 PVS dashboards](#) describing Members' engagement with the PVS Pathway).

The WOAAH database related to self-declaration of disease freedom was among the databases that were improved to facilitate access to relevant information. A dashboard giving access to all active self-declarations is now available on the website and allows filtration of information by region, country, type of disease (aquatic vs terrestrial animal disease) and disease.

This process and the toolset selected will be further reviewed in the 2024 Data Management and Architecture roadmap.

## 2.1.5. Global Burden of Animal Diseases

The Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBADs) consortium reached several milestones in the development of a robust and systematic approach to assess the economic burden of animal diseases, provide estimates of net loss of production, related expenditure and trade impacts, determine where the burdens occur and to whom, and identify the causes and risk factors. Notable achievements in 2023 included:

- *Trialling of GBADs methods* – The Canadian International Development Research Centre (IDRC) provided funds to further trial GBADs methods with the implementation of a new case study in Senegal. The study looked at the economic impact of diseases in small ruminants with a focus on peste des petits ruminants (PPR). Case studies in Ethiopia, with funding from the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation and the United Kingdom Foreign Commonwealth and Development Office, and in Indonesia, using funds from the Australian Centre for International Agricultural Research, were continued.
- *Derivation of quantitative estimates on economic impact of animal diseases* – Initial estimates on the economic impact of animal diseases along the GBADs analytical structure (Figure 5) are available for cattle and small ruminants in Ethiopia and initial estimates are available for some disease burden estimates for specific species in 16 countries.

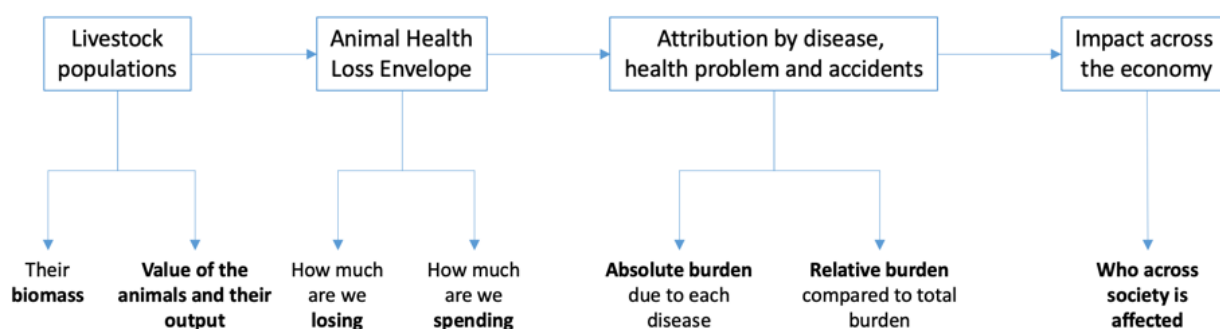


Figure 5. GBADs analytical structure

- *Development and application of a robust data governance system* – There are currently 82 datasets in the GBADs knowledge engine, which have been cleaned to ensure data quality and stored following good data stewardship practices. These datasets have allowed analysis and development of estimates, which are reflected in publicly available prototype dashboards on national animal population, biomass, total economic value of animals, the animal health loss envelope (AHLE), attribution of the AHLE, and wider economic impacts (<https://www.gbadske.org/dashboards/>).
- *Demonstration of utility* – Veterinary Authorities in Ethiopia and Senegal have started creating mechanisms to ensure readiness to incorporate the GBADs approach into investment decision-making processes once the approach is solidified. In both countries, a dedicated GBADs Focal Person has been officially assigned, both of whom are senior government officials well-informed on the GBADs programme. [In Ethiopia](#), an animal health economics core group has also been officially established within the Ministry of Agriculture.
- *Capacity building resources* – The network of WOAHC Collaborating Centres on the economics of animal health was expanded to include a centre for the Americas. This centre brings together Kansas State University and Washington State University in the United States of America, the University of San Paolo and the University of Brasilia in Brazil, and Universidad Nacional Autónoma de México in Mexico.

The GBADs programme continues to be in a scientific discovery phase and more time is needed to establish robust and systematic analytical methods. The expertise required at this stage is being provided by academic and research institutions of the GBADs consortium. Thus, WOAAH has decided to reposition the Organisation's involvement in GBADs and step back from its co-leadership and lead-grantee role. WOAAH will, however, continue to play an advisory and steering role to contribute to evaluating GBADs' scientific robustness from the perspective of its fitness for purpose for WOAAH Members, and advise on the programme's direction to ensure consistency and usefulness for WOAAH Members' policy needs. This change will not be immediate, as WOAAH will honour its role as lead grantee to active grants for their respective lifespan until the last grant closes in 2025. Notwithstanding, as of May 2024, WOAAH will be withdrawing from its role as co-leader of the GBADs consortium. Once the research-centred phases are complete and the methodologies have proven their utility to WOAAH Members and national Veterinary Services, WOAAH may reconsider its engagement in GBADs: This may include facilitating GBADs' sustainable rollout or institutionalisation by using GBADs methodologies to inform WOAAH guidelines on animal health economics, potential WOAAH standards and training materials for WOAAH Members.

## **2.2. Standard setting and implementation**

### **2.2.1 Overview of the standard-setting process**

Each of the four WOAAH Specialist Commissions met in February 2023 and September 2023. All members appreciated the return to in-person meetings and acknowledged that this format enhanced the quality of discussions and decision-making given they had more time together and without the hindrance of working in different time zones when in a virtual format.

The WOAAH Common Secretariat has continued to promote good regulatory practices for the WOAAH international standards development and review process. The Common Secretariat has been successful in continuing to further improve the coordination of the work of the Specialist Commissions, *ad hoc* Groups and Working Groups, and documenting the standard-setting process and associated procedures. The year 2023 saw the consolidation of many of the mechanisms that are now systematically implemented to facilitate and coordinate the horizontal management of the work associated with the four Commissions, as well as the establishment of a Terrestrial Standards Coordination, a new mechanism for long-term planning of the overall work related to the development of terrestrial standards involving collaboration between Secretariats, as well as the inclusion of different Headquarters' teams involved in the standard-setting process.

The Commission Secretariats also worked successfully together on a number of projects to develop cross-cutting processes, including the development of: (i) a process to publish comments submitted on new and revised texts on Delegates' and public websites; (ii) a Guidance document and standard operating procedure (SOP) for submitting comments; and (iii) a stepwise process for the elaboration of standards. All of these activities support and enable good regulatory practices for the WOAAH standard-setting process, including the development and documentation of processes for efficient functioning of the WOAAH Specialist Commissions and related activities.

Many WOAAH Members contribute actively to the standard-setting process through the submission of comments. In 2023, the average number of Members submitting comments for new and revised texts circulated was 75 (ranging from 35 to 98 Members depending on the Commission and whether for the February or the September meeting).

International organisations with a cooperation agreement with WOAAH may also contribute to the standard-setting process through the submission of comments. In 2023, two partner international organisations representing industry sectors submitted comments. Given the importance of the engagement of partner organisations in the standard-setting process, the WOAAH Secretariat undertook an analysis of the participation of these types of international organisations in the Code Commission's activities since 2013. The analysis highlighted some good examples of effective collaboration and noted that the level of engagement varied over time and that engagement often occurred near the end of the consultation process. The Code Commission emphasised the importance of encouraging more of these organisations to submit comments as they can provide valuable comments on industry processes and the practical implementation of the proposed texts.

The Commission agreed with the Secretariat to promote proactive and sustainable participation of these partner organisations in WOAAH's standard-setting activities.

All Specialist Commission Presidents delivered a presentation at the information webinars prior to the 2023 General Session as part of the process of engagement of WOAAH Members and partner organisations in the standard-setting process. These webinars gave participants information about the new and revised texts circulated for comment or those proposed for adoption. In addition, some Specialist Commission members presented updates on relevant standard-setting work at regional webinars after the September meetings. These initiatives have resulted in an increase in Members' active engagement in the standard-setting process.

The Performance Management Framework to evaluate the performance of the current Specialist Commissions continued in 2023. The Framework is designed to promote ongoing improvement of the work of Commission members and each Commission. The Framework includes a series of activities which are conducted throughout the term of the Commissions (i.e. September 2021 to May 2024), and includes meeting reviews, meetings between Commission members and the Deputy Director General 'International Standards and Science' and self-evaluations of the performance of members and their respective Commissions. A Framework summary report will be considered by the WOAAH Council at its May 2024 meeting, leading up to the election of experts to Specialist Commissions in May 2024.

## **2.2.2 Activities of the Specialist Commissions and Groups**

The four WOAAH Specialist Commissions are responsible for overseeing a wide range of activities, including the work of many *ad hoc* Groups, and for ensuring that WOAAH international standards (*Aquatic Animal Health Code* [*Aquatic Code*], *Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals* [*Aquatic Manual*], *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* [*Terrestrial Code*] and *Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals* [*Terrestrial Manual*]) are regularly updated and reflect current scientific evidence.

The Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission oversees the standard-setting work for the *Terrestrial Code*, the Biological Standards Commission oversees the standard-setting work for the *Terrestrial Manual* and the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission oversees the standard-setting work for the *Aquatic Code* and the *Aquatic Manual*. The Biological Standards Commission and the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission also oversee the work of WOAAH Reference Centres. The Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission) oversees WOAAH official recognition of animal health status and provides scientific advice to other Specialist Commissions as needed.

To carry out their respective responsibilities, each Commission collaborates closely with other Commissions and with dedicated WOAAH Secretariat staff in several WOAAH technical departments.

### **2.2.2.1 Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission**

The Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) held meetings in February and September 2023. The [reports](#) are available online.

During both meetings, the Code Commission contributed to WOAAH's standard-setting process by considering proposals or requests for the development of new or revised texts for the *Terrestrial Code* and responding to comments received from Members and partner organisations on texts circulated for comment, as well as other matters of relevance. As part of this standard-setting work, the Commission also considered four [ad hoc Group reports](#) and other expert consultation reports. The Code Commission also liaised with the Scientific Commission, the Biological Standards Commission, the Aquatic Animals Commission, the Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance and the Working Group on Wildlife on topics of common interest to ensure alignment of relevant work and for scientific advice, as appropriate.

The Code Commission finalised three new draft chapters that were circulated for comment for the first time in its September 2023 meeting report:

- draft new Chapter 4.X. Biosecurity;
- draft new Chapter 5.4. Measures and procedures applicable in the exportation of commodities;
- draft new Chapter 5.6. Measures and procedures applicable in the importation of commodities.

Highlights of the Commission's work included the adoption of the following new and revised texts in the *Terrestrial Code* by the Assembly at the 2023 General Session:

- revised Glossary definitions for: 'animal product', 'biological product', 'commodity', 'death', 'euthanasia', 'germinal products', 'greaves', 'semen collection centre', 'slaughter' and 'stunning';

**13 revised chapters:**

- Chapter 1.3. Diseases, infections and infestations listed by WOAHP
- Chapter 4.6. General hygiene in semen collection and processing centres
- Chapter 4.7. Collection and processing of bovine, small ruminant and porcine semen
- Chapter 6.10. Responsible and prudent use of antimicrobial agents in veterinary medicine
- Chapter 7.5. Slaughter of animals
- Chapter 8.8. Infection with foot and mouth disease virus
- Chapter 1.11. Application for official recognition by WOAHP of free status for foot and mouth disease
- Chapter 8.16. Infection with Rift Valley fever virus
- Chapter 8.18. Infection with *Trichinella* spp
- Chapter 8.Z. Infection with *Trypanosoma evansi*
- Chapter 11.5. Infection with *Mycoplasma mycoides* subsp. *Mycoides* SC (Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia)
- Chapter 12.1. Infection with African horse sickness virus
- Chapter 15.1. Infection with African swine fever virus

**Four new chapters:**

- Chapter 8.X. Infection with *Coxiella burnetii* (Q Fever)
  - Chapter 11.X. Infection with bovine pestiviruses (Bovine viral diarrhoea)
  - Chapter 13.2. Rabbit haemorrhagic disease
  - Chapter 16.Z. Infection with Camelpox virus
- Horizontal amendments for the use of Glossary definitions for 'Competent Authority', 'Veterinary Authority' and 'Veterinary Services'.

All adopted amendments were published in the 2023 edition of the *Terrestrial Code*.



### **2.2.2.2 Biological Standards Commission**

The Biological Standards Commission held two meetings in 2023. The [reports](#) are available online.

At both meetings, the Biological Standards Commission:

- contributed to WOA's standard-setting process by overseeing the update of chapters for the *Terrestrial Manual*;
- advised WOA on the appropriate use of diagnostic tests and vaccines;
- evaluated 13 applications for WOA Reference Centre status, 15 changes of experts, and compliance with the Terms of Reference (ToRs) through a review of 282 annual reports of Reference Centre activities in the terrestrial animal domain;
- supervised the WOA register of diagnostic assays;
- liaised with the Scientific Commission and the Code Commission on topics of common interest.

Highlights of the year's activities included the following:

- revision of comments on the 16 draft chapters that had been sent for first-round Member comment in October 2022, and approval of 15 for circulation for second-round comment. The 15 chapters, in addition to the updated glossary, were presented to WOA Members at a pre-General Session webinar organised in April 2023. All 15 went on to be adopted at the 90th General Session in May 2023 and can be found [online](#). At the September 2023 meeting, 15 chapters were approved for first-round comment and were subsequently sent to Members, in October 2023;
- the Commission finalised the template developed to justify the selection of tests of all disease-specific chapters of the *Terrestrial Manual* on the test methods available for the diagnosis of the disease in question along with the rating of their fitness for purpose, following its use by experts in the 2023/2024 review cycle when they were invited to update or draft a *Terrestrial Manual* chapter. The Commission believes that this new section is an excellent addition to chapters in the *Terrestrial Manual*, providing users with extremely useful information when they are deciding on tests to use for the various purposes, while ensuring that the selection process is evidence-based. The new tables provide information on the type of sample, the test's accuracy, the test population, the validation report if available, the advantages and disadvantages, and references.

### **2.2.2.3 Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases**

The Scientific Commission met in February 2023 and in September 2023. The [reports](#) are available online.

At both meetings, the Scientific Commission:

- contributed to WOA's standard-setting process by providing scientific input as requested in response to comments received from Members on *Terrestrial Code* chapters and other matters as they arose;
- for *ad hoc* Groups convened by the Director General under the Commission's supervision, reviewed the ToRs for planned future *ad hoc* Groups and the reports of those already conducted;
- made assessments regarding the official animal health status of Members and worked on standards related to official status recognition;

- worked on disease control-specific issues, including (but not limited to) the development of case definitions to facilitate notification, the evaluation of diseases against the listing criteria described in Chapter 1.2. of the *Terrestrial Code* and against the Glossary definition of emerging disease, and provided recommendations on global disease control and eradication strategies;
- liaised with the Biological Standards Commission and the Code Commission on topics of common interest.

Highlights of the year's activities included the following:

- five *ad hoc* Group reports on the evaluation of a total of 13 applications for official recognition of animal health status and for WOAAH endorsement of official control programmes were reviewed. Of the 13 applications, eight achieved official recognition by the Assembly in May 2023;
- 46 annual reconfirmations for official animal health status and 12 annual reconfirmations for the endorsement of official control programmes of 2022 were comprehensively assessed;
- three applications were reviewed for the recovery of suspended free status or approval of a containment zone;
- revision of the new BSE annual reconfirmation form and guidelines for targeted BSE surveillance, in consultation with BSE *ad hoc* Group experts, according to the adoption of the revised BSE standards in May 2023;
- annual reassessment of existing emerging diseases according to the existing standard operating procedure (SOP);

Collaboration with the Code Commission on the following:

- review of Chapters 1.6., 1.11. and 8.8. on FMD, 1.8. and 11.4. on bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and 12.1. on AHS to ensure a common understanding of the main concerns raised by Members, the decisions made on the revised chapter and their impact on official status recognition, as well as on the adapted procedures that will be required;
- review of the time limit for a containment zone, in Article 4.4.7. of Chapter 4.4. Zoning and compartmentalisation;
- review of the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group on surra and dourine for revisions to Chapter 8.Z. Infection with *Trypanosoma equiperdum* and Chapter 12.3. Dourine;
- review of the recommendations of the *ad hoc* Group on biosecurity for new Chapter 4.X. Biosecurity;
- endorsement of three case definitions for terrestrial animal diseases;
- evaluation of four diseases against the listing criteria of *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 1.2.

#### **2.2.2.4. Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission**

The Aquatic Animals Health Standards Commission (Aquatic Animals Commission) held meetings in February and September 2023. The [reports](#) are available online. During both meetings, the Aquatic Animals Commission contributed to the WOAAH standard-setting process by considering proposals or requests for the development of new or revised texts for the *Aquatic Code* and the *Aquatic Manual* and responding to comments received from Members on texts circulated for comment, as well as other matters as they arose. As part of its standard-setting work the Commission also considered five *ad hoc* Group reports when revising relevant texts. The Aquatic Animals Commission also liaised with the Biological Standards Commission and the Code Commission on topics of common interest to ensure alignment of relevant work, as appropriate.



The Aquatic Animals Commission finalised four new draft chapters that were circulated for comment for the first time in its September 2023 meeting report:

- draft new Chapter 4.X. Emergency disease preparedness;
- draft new Chapter 4.Y. Disease outbreak management;
- draft new Chapter 4.Z. Control of pathogenic agents in traded milt and fertilised eggs of fish; and
- draft new Chapter 5.X. Movement of ornamental aquatic animals

Highlights of the Commission's work included the adoption of the following new and revised texts in the *Aquatic Code* and *Aquatic Manual*, respectively, by the Assembly at the 2023 General Session.

***Aquatic Code:***

- a new disease-specific Chapter 10.11. Infection with tilapia lake virus;
- a revised list of susceptible species in Article 11.4.2. of Chapter 11.4. Infection with *Marteilia refringens*;
- amendments to Articles 11.X.9. to 11.X.14. for all mollusc-disease-specific chapters (i.e. Chapters 11.1 to 11.7.).

***Aquatic Manual:***

Comprehensive updates using the new disease chapter template for:

- Chapter 2.2.1. Acute hepatopancreatic necrosis disease
- Chapter 2.2.3. Infection with *Hepatobacter penaei* (necrotising hepatopancreatitis)
- Chapter 2.2.4. Infection with infectious hypodermal and haematopoietic necrosis virus
- Chapter 2.2.5. Infection with infectious myonecrosis virus
- Chapter 2.2.7. Infection with Taura syndrome virus
- Chapter 2.2.8. Infection with white spot syndrome virus
- Chapter 2.3.1. Infection with *Aphanomyces invadans* (epizootic ulcerative syndrome)
- Chapter 2.3.2. Infection with epizootic haematopoietic necrosis virus.

All adopted amendments were published in the 2023 edition of the [Aquatic Code](#) and the [Aquatic Manual](#), respectively.

The Commission, as part of its work regarding WOAHA Reference Centres, evaluated two applications for WOAHA Reference Centre status, one change of expert and compliance with the terms of reference through a review of the 40 annual reports of Reference Centres in the aquatic domain.

## **2.2.2.5 Activities of the Working Groups**

### **2.2.2.5.1 Wildlife**

The Working Group on Wildlife (WGW) held two meetings in 2023. The [full reports](#) of both meetings are available online. Highlights from the period are described below.

The Working Group expressed serious concerns about HPAI in wild animals, in particular the broadening range of wild animal species affected (mammals and birds) and the impact of the disease on wildlife, including mass die-offs in birds and sea mammals. Avian influenza has the potential to cause an ecological disaster, particularly in areas such as the sub-Antarctic region and Antarctica. The Group issued several statements and drafted [guidance on considerations for emergency vaccination of wild birds against high pathogenicity avian influenza \(HPAI\)](#) in immediate response to an outbreak or increased risk of introduction of HPAI. The Group urged WOAHA Members to manage risks by working closely with wildlife authorities.

The Working Group reiterated that climate change was impacting the health of wildlife and issued a [statement on the El Niño Southern Oscillation](#), warning WOAHA Members of the potential effects on disease spread and emergence.

The Working Group welcomed the achievements of the WOAHA Wildlife Health Programme, including: the successful completion of the [EBOSURSY project](#); the establishment of a WOAHA Collaborating Centre network on wildlife health; and extensive exploratory work on the next generation wildlife disease reporting system, to replace WAHIS-wild with a next generation system aimed at better meeting the needs of all stakeholders.

The Working Group continues to collaborate closely with Specialist Commissions and made recommendations to better integrate wildlife health into chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*.

#### **2.2.2.5.2 Antimicrobial resistance**

The Working Group on Antimicrobial Resistance (WG AMR), composed in 2023 of six international experts, has continued the development of its working programme. [Full reports](#) of the three meetings held in 2023 are available online. Major highlights from the period include:

- The second endorsement of a revised version of *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 6.10. on Responsible use of antimicrobials in veterinary medicine. The revision was conducted by a [Subgroup of the WG AMR](#). The revised chapter was subsequently submitted for the consideration of the Code Commission, which endorsed it in September 2023 and redistributed it to WOAHA Members for feedback during the last quarter of 2023.
- The launch of two *ad hoc* Groups for the development of Technical Reference Documents listing Antimicrobials of Veterinary Importance for 1) cats and dogs and 2) bovine animal species. The chair of each of the *ad hoc* Groups is a member of the WG AMR.
- The decision to conduct the update of the public health recommendations in the Main List of Antimicrobial Agents of Veterinary Importance, following the upcoming update of the WHO Medically Important Antimicrobials List, on which WOAHA Members were invited to participate through [public consultation](#). This update is due to be presented to WOAHA Members as a resolution for adoption during the 91st General Session (May 2024).
- The update of the WG AMR [Terms of Reference](#), including an appointment period of three years, and a reinforcement of selection criteria to maintain a balanced and adequate geographic representation, as well as a balanced gender representation.

- The [call to recruit new members](#) following the departure of Dr Gerard Moulin in December 2022 and Prof. Moritz van Vuuren in December 2023. The call specifically targeted the Americas and Africa Regions and was conducted in mid-2023 taking into account the aforementioned updated criteria. Among the 54 applications received (33 for the Americas and 19 for Africa), 16 candidates were shortlisted and presented to WOAAH's Director General for appraisal. Two of them, one per targeted region, have been selected and will be presented to WOAAH's Council for endorsement when it meets in March 2024.

### 2.2.3 Status

#### 2.2.3.1 Applications for the official recognition of animal health status

In promoting the safe international trade of commodities through achieving official recognition of disease-free status of countries or zones, or endorsement of official disease control programmes, WOAAH received 13 new applications in 2023 (Table 4). The application dossiers were evaluated during the meetings of the respective *ad hoc* Group for each disease, held between September and December 2023. The applications and evaluation reports of the *ad hoc* Groups were forwarded to the Scientific Commission for evaluation and, where appropriate, recommendation to the Assembly for adoption at the 91st General Session in May 2024.

**Table 4.** Distribution of new applications received in 2023, by disease

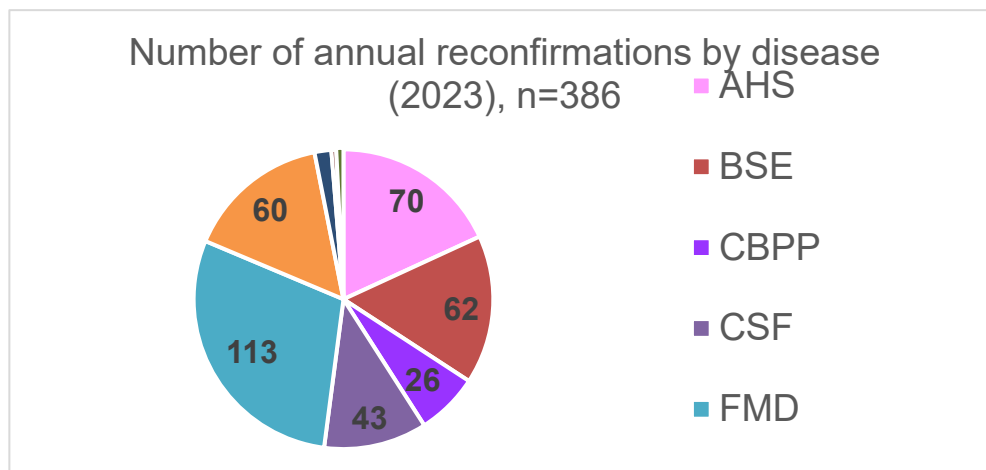
Disease and category	No. of applications
<b>African horse sickness</b>	
Country freedom	3
<b>Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia</b>	
Country freedom	2
<b>Foot and mouth disease</b>	
Country freedom without vaccination	1
Country freedom with vaccination	1
Zonal freedom with vaccination	2
<b>Peste des petits ruminants</b>	
Country freedom	1
Zonal freedom	1
Endorsement of control programme	1
<b>Dog-mediated rabies</b>	
Endorsement of control programme	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>13</b>

In accordance with [Resolution No. 20](#), adopted at the 90th General Session in May 2023, it was agreed that the evaluation of applications for the official recognition and annual reconfirmation of BSE risk status would be based on the newly adopted provisions beginning with the annual cycle of May 2024 – May 2025.

#### 2.2.3.2 Annual reconfirmations

In accordance with the *Terrestrial Code* and the relevant SOPs, WOAAH Members having an officially recognised animal health status or an endorsed official control programme are obliged to reconfirm the maintenance of their official status or official control programme each year during November. As a result of the new statuses and programmes respectively recognised and endorsed by the Assembly every year, since

2015 there has been an average annual increase of 5% in the number of annual reconfirmations submitted by Members. A total of 386 annual reconfirmations were screened by the Status Department in 2023; FMD-free status represented the biggest proportion of reconfirmations (Figure 6). In 2023, around 80% of annual reconfirmations were submitted by 8 December 2023 (extended deadline for submission due to the launch of the new Disease Status Management Platform).



**Figure 6.** Number of annual reconfirmations by disease (2023), n=386

### 2.2.3.3 Development of the Disease Status Management Platform

In 2023, WOAHA initiated the development of the Disease Status Management Platform (DSMP) in line with the strategic objectives of the Seventh Strategic Plan for optimising data governance through digital transformation. The DSMP is intended to serve as a secure, centralised system for archiving, tracking, searching for and submitting all the necessary documents related to the official recognition and maintenance of animal health status and the self-declaration of disease freedom. At the same time, it aims to facilitate the exchange between WOAHA and its Members and ensure that Members have easy and secure access to their documents and reports and can also consult all relevant guidance related to these procedures.

The first component of the DSMP relates to the annual reconfirmation procedure and was launched at the beginning of November and allowed all annual reconfirmations of Members to be submitted for the 2023 campaign. The DSMP will have two other components, one related to the submission of applications for official recognition of animal health status and endorsement of official control programmes and the other on the publication of self-declarations, both of which are under development.

### 2.2.3.4 Self-declarations

Publication of self-declarations on the WOAHA website provides an opportunity for Members to increase the visibility of their animal health status and the associated risk mitigation measures in place, promote the quality of their Veterinary Services and demonstrate transparency in animal disease reporting and continuous compliance with WOAHA standards.

Responding to the growing interest in the publication of self-declarations of aquatic and terrestrial animal health status, WOAHA developed specific templates under the SOP to assist Members in compiling their self-declarations. Furthermore, WOAHA improved the website presentation of the published self-declarations to enhance user experience by allowing different filtering and search functions. To further promote these changes in templates and on the website, the Status Department held a kiosk at the General Session in May 2023.

To ensure and maintain a list of Members' self-declarations that is accurate and in line with the current WOHAH standards, WOHAH initiated a revision process of all published self-declarations and notified relevant Members to submit updated versions should they wish to maintain them. This process will be carried out on a yearly basis, as described in the SOP.

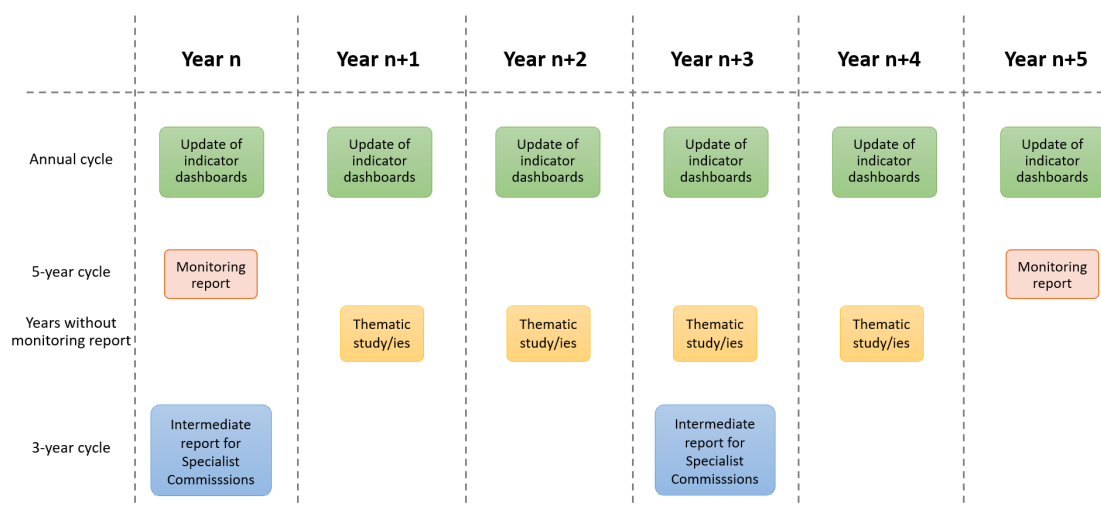
Showing a slight increase on previous years, 42 self-declarations were submitted in 2023 (33 dossiers in 2022). HPAI continued to be the most frequent disease for which Members wished to self-declare their freedom (76.2%, n=32/42), and only one self-declaration dossier was submitted for aquatic diseases.

## 2.2.4 Observatory

After the successful launch of its first monitoring report in January 2023 (more than 123,000 views of the webpage), the WOHAH Observatory focused its efforts on the following activities:

- Capitalising on the feedback received to refine the cycle of monitoring reports.

Feedback received from Members, partners and the Observatory's consultation and expert groups led to an evolution of the structure of the report itself (to be seen in its next edition early 2025) and to the adjustment of the publication cycle. The frequency of publication of monitoring reports was reduced to a report every 5 years, bearing in mind that indicator trends do not change significantly over a one-year period. This would also allow Members and the Organisation more time to implement recommendations. This 5-year cycle will coincide with the development of WOHAH's strategic plans. Nevertheless, the Observatory will endeavour to update the indicator dashboards annually and prepare a short report every 3 years to inform the newly elected Specialist Commissions (Figure 7).



**Figure 7.** Schematic representation of the cycles planned for the Observatory's publications

- First thematic studies

In 2023, the Observatory started its first thematic studies, with a focus on specific priority topics for the Organisation and our Members. New data were collected to allow a more detailed understanding of the level of implementation of the targeted standards and, above all, the challenges our Members may face when implementing them.

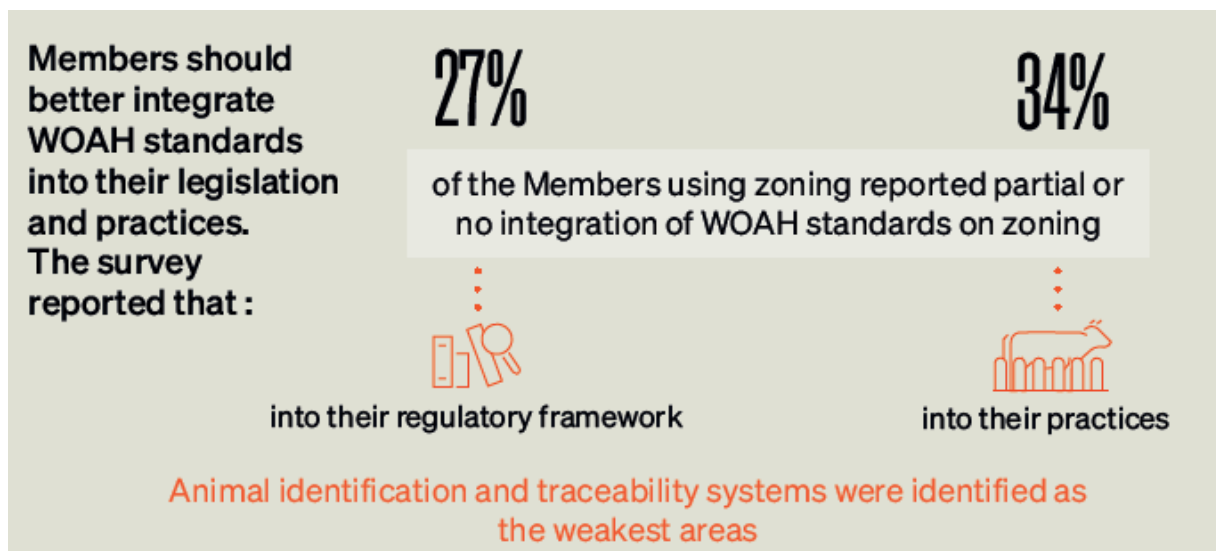
### a) Zoning and compartmentalisation

WOAH standards on zoning and compartmentalisation help Members to prevent and control the spread of disease and contribute to ensuring the safe trade of animals and related commodities. However, the effective implementation of these standards remains challenging and Members' capacity to use them limited.

The Observatory has therefore decided to focus its first thematic study on these standards. A survey was first conducted to assess the use of zoning for avian influenza, ASF and FMD, alongside the associated challenges, benefits and drawbacks. Sixty-five percent of WOA's 183 Members completed at least one of the three questionnaires; this high participation rate is indicative of the perceived importance of the topic.

The descriptive analysis of this survey has now been [published](#); the report identifies Members' specific needs and proposes targeted recommendations to meet them. A [factsheet](#) summarises the main findings.

Survey answers on the uptake of WOA standards on zoning showed that there is room for improvement (Figure 8).



**Figure 8.** Extract from the factsheet showing the percentage of Members that have not integrated WOA standards on zoning into their legislation and practices

The main challenges to establishing zones reported by the respondents were the level of staffing of veterinary resources and the enforcement of biosecurity requirements. From a trade perspective, zone acceptance appeared to be a far-from-easy process and may take up to more than two years. Though 'peace-time' trade agreements may help zone acceptance, transparency and trust in the certification system appeared to be the main drivers of zone acceptance by trading partners.

This analysis has laid the foundation for a further analysis (e.g. to explore factors influencing zone acceptance by trading partners), the results of which are due to be published in 2024. In addition, a second phase of this study will explore the use, benefits and challenges of implementing compartmentalisation for avian influenza. For this survey, data will be collected from Veterinary Authorities as well as from the private sector; a shorter questionnaire will be completed through interviews and/or focus groups.

b) Animal welfare during transport by land and sea: level of implementation of WOA standards by Members' Veterinary Services

A second thematic study was launched in November 2023 to assess the level of implementation of WOA standards related to animal welfare during transport of live animals, as well as to explore the barriers to the uptake of these standards (see [Section 2.4.3](#)). Responses have been received from 53% of national Focal Points for Animal Welfare. The results will be analysed in 2024.



- Assessing the need for an Observatory Digital Platform

The need for a digital platform dedicated to the Observatory was confirmed following the publication of the first monitoring report. The need for data scalability, automation and searchability and access to Members' specific data was reported. In 2023, a survey and several workshops were conducted to identify and analyse the key stakeholders, user groups and their needs. Based on this, documentation of the potential features of the platform was progressively compiled.

In 2024, the Observatory is due to further explore the development of a digital platform that will provide all Observatory deliverables in one place, including specific access based on a user's profile.

Such a platform will ease users' navigation through the Observatory outcomes and indicators. It will also provide WOAHA Members with secure access to their country's data and comparison with global/regional indicator data.

- Engaging with Observatory stakeholders

In 2023, the Observatory organised or participated in several events and activities that enhanced the visibility of its objectives and achievements. WOAHA Members were engaged via different events involving Delegates or technical staff from the Veterinary Services (e.g. the Conferences of the Regional Commissions, a kiosk during the General Session and technical webinars). The Observatory also actively pursued its collaboration with key partner organisations (e.g. Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development [OECD], World Trade Organization (WTO), Codex, International Plant Protection Convention [IPPC]). Collaboration with Codex and the IPPC led to the joint organisation of side-events at the meetings of the WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (WTO SPS Committee) and the Codex Committee on General Principles.

### 2.2.5 Foresight

In the context of WOAHA's 100th anniversary, a [Participatory Foresight Project was launched](#) in July 2023 aimed at looking at current and emerging opportunities and challenges, anticipating how these may impact animal health and welfare many decades from now and, in so doing, asking ourselves what sort of actions could be considered. The project is scheduled to conclude in June 2024 with the publication of a trend and driver book, scenarios depicting alternative future possibilities and a playbook on the highlights of running a foresight project.

## 2.3. Capacity building

The mission statement of WOAHA's capacity-building programme is to provide assessment and guidance to Members for improving the sustainable governance and management of Veterinary Services, and their leadership in animal health systems, in line with WOAHA standards. To do this, we use expertise and tested methodologies through the Performance of Veterinary Services Pathway (PVS Pathway) and the WOAHA Training Platform. We promote the dissemination of these results by facilitating communication to and between stakeholders, including partners, donors and public, private and non-profit actors.

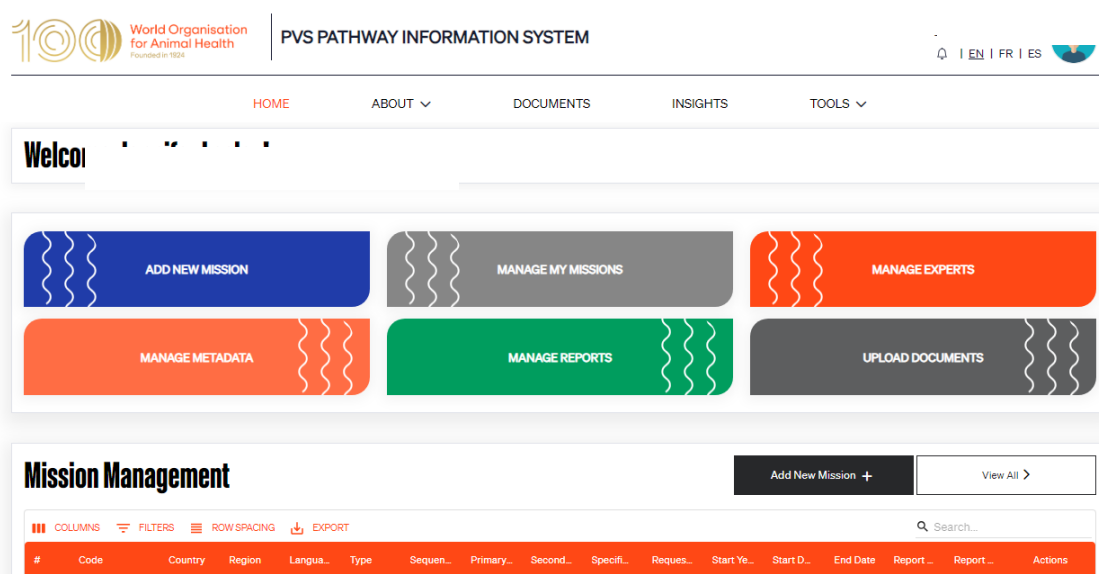
Sustainable capacity building is considered as an important activity in the WOAHA Seventh Strategic Plan (2021-2025) for the improvement of animal health and welfare worldwide, in support of global goals. Considering the transversal functions of WOAHA, different kinds of capacity-building initiatives support Members in reducing inequalities in the capacities and resources of national Veterinary Services, aimed at improving the effectiveness and sustainability of global animal health and welfare, and contributing to the strengthening of global health governance. The [PVS Pathway](#) provides institutional and country-tailored services for Competent Authorities, while the WOAHA [Training Platform](#) delivers learner-centred opportunities for individuals. The two initiatives – combined and mutually supported – guarantee a simultaneous top-down and bottom-up competency-oriented approach. Twinning projects empower Members by sharing expertise in specific thematic areas. Along with these structured initiatives, WOAHA is

agile in responding to emerging needs and in strengthening capabilities, including under Quadripartite commitments and within the One Health framework. A special issue of [WOAH Panorama](#) dedicated to capacity building was published in 2023.

### 2.3.1 PVS Pathway

#### PVS Pathway Information System (PVS IS)

The [PVS IS](#) aims to meet the evolving needs of Veterinary Services to facilitate performance improvements and monitoring by offering greater insight in addition to the narrative-based PVS Reports. A complete documentation of the performance of a Member's Veterinary Services, the PVS Report contains insights that WOAAH has unlocked so that governments, investors and partners can access, use, and act upon the report's recommendations more easily. The PVS IS uses the recommendations made in [PVS Reports](#) from more than 140 Members engaged in the programme since 2007 to [monitor progress](#) and prioritise action.



**Figure 9.** Home Page view prototype of the PVS Pathway Information System

The innovation behind the PVS IS unlocks the power of historical data and insight contained in PVS Reports. For the first time, WOAAH is using natural language processing and machine learning, and a key result of this novel approach is insight into the most common recommendations, strengths and weaknesses of the Veterinary Services across the globe. Focusing on the strengths weaknesses, and recommendations for each PVS Critical Competency, WOAAH has migrated all essential information from more than 210 PVS Evaluation and Follow-up Reports to its secure transactional database that allows for a systematic analysis of PVS trends.

The PVS IS maintains the same level of confidentiality that Members have already established for all their existing PVS Reports. While each Member will be able to view its own data securely, it will not have permission to view another Member's identifiable data. All interactive dashboards will present PVS data anonymously and grouped as a cohort, to respect each Member's preferences and confidentiality. The PVS IS caters to Members' Delegates and national Focal Points, WOAAH's institutional partners and donors, as well as PVS Experts.

The first version of the PVS IS was developed in 2023, with features to view past PVS Reports, see historical PVS Pathway engagement, view Evaluation reports, explore Critical Competencies and Levels of Advancement as well as recommendations, strengths, weaknesses and findings for each, and to view performance data and trends for the first time through dashboards, based on data extracted from PVS reports. Development of the automation of PVS Pathway processes



started in 2023, as well as the digitalisation of all forms and data collection for new Evaluation-type missions. Starting in the second semester of 2024, all PVS Evaluation-type reports will be written fully online, data insights in dashboards will be available in real-time and next steps in each Member’s PVS Pathway will be projected in the form of roadmaps. Starting in 2024, all Delegates will have access to the newly developed functionalities.

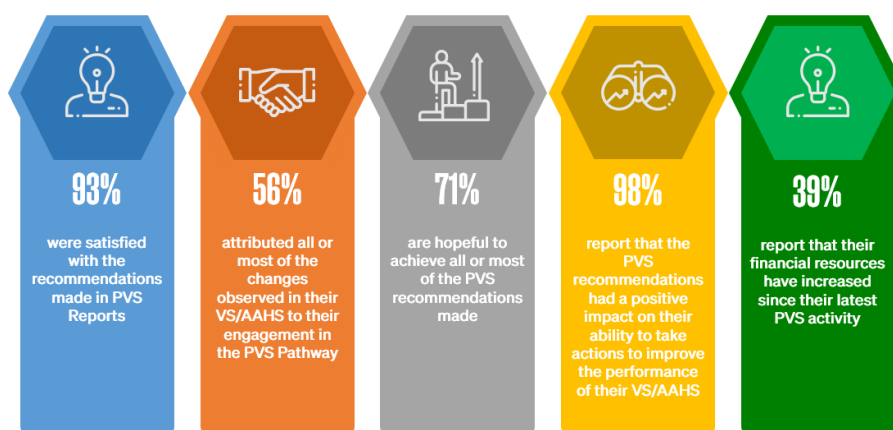
In anticipation of the system’s launch, data dashboards and insight on the PVS Pathway Programme were launched on the WOAAH website in 2023, along with a full renovation of the PVS Pathway’s offering as displayed on the WOAAH website. In 2023, Delegates received training during the Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, and the Conference of the Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in New Delhi, India.

- PVS Pathway Recommendations Impact Evaluation

WOAH initiated the [PVS Pathway Recommendations Impact Evaluation](#) and asked its current Delegates to share their perceptions of the outputs, outcomes and impact of the recommendations resulting from their country’s latest PVS report or activity. The survey was developed to assess the performance of the PVS Pathway Programme in general, as well as to contribute to our baseline understanding of programme impact prior to the global launch of the PVS IS.

In line with the PVS Pathway Theory of Change, WOAAH aims to improve access to and use of PVS reports, information and data for improved Veterinary Services, health and welfare and livelihoods. The survey was distributed solely to Delegates of Members that had at least one PVS activity since the programme’s inception in 2007. While Delegates may not have personally experienced the PVS activity during that time, they most likely had access to, read or used the PVS Report and/or recommendations or data contained therein. WOAAH aimed to capture perspectives on the impact over time of PVS Pathway engagement and, most importantly, the provision of external and independent recommendations contained in the PVS Reports.

Preliminary results (n=41) show that 93% of respondents were satisfied with the recommendations made in PVS Reports, 56% attributed all or most of the changes observed in their Veterinary Services to their engagement in the PVS Pathway, and 71% were hopeful of achieving all or most of the PVS recommendations made; 98% of respondents reported that the recommendations made by PVS Experts and presented in PVS reports had had a positive impact on their ability to take concrete actions to improve the performance of their Veterinary Services and Aquatic Animal Health Services, and 39% reported that their financial resources had increased since their latest PVS activity.

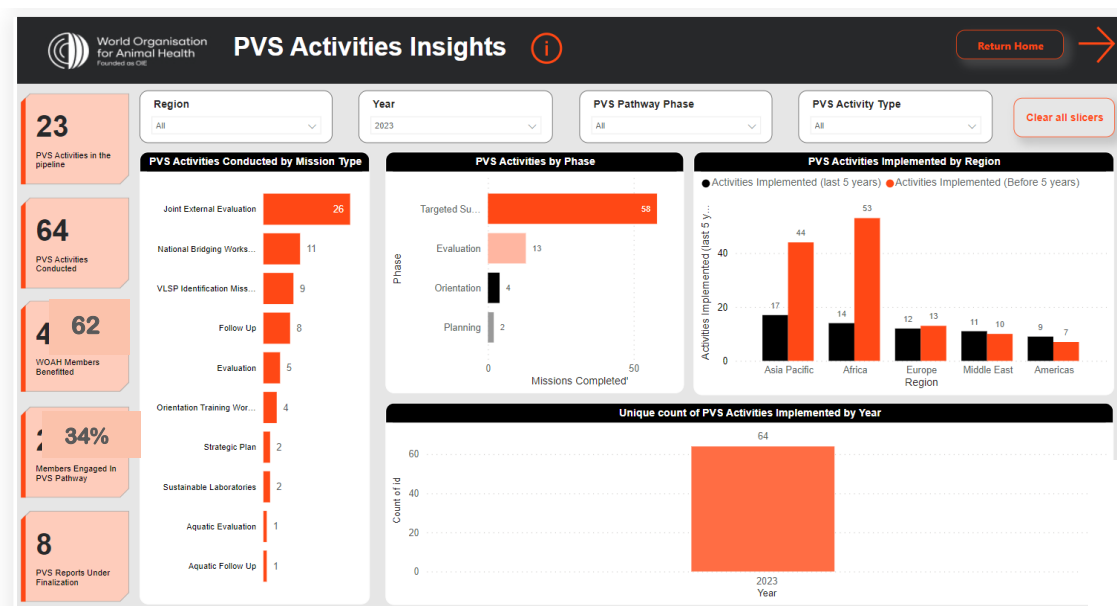


**Figure 10.** Selected preliminary results of the PVS Pathway Recommendations Impact Evaluation Survey

An analysis of **Gender and the PVS Pathway** was conducted. The study, carried out by an external consultant, included 37 interviews with WOAHA staff, Delegates from all Regions and PVS Pathway Experts (13 men, 24 women), and 15 responses to a questionnaire by PVS Pathway Experts (7 men, 8 women). Recommendations included minor and major elements to be taken into account to better integrate gender considerations into the PVS Pathway, in line with WOAHA's commitment to mainstream gender in the veterinary sector. Relevant recommendations will be integrated into programme guidance and piloted in upcoming PVS activities, while cross-cutting issues will be considered across WOAHA departments. Among Veterinary Legislation Support Programme (VLSP) missions, workforce development missions and Public–Private Partnership (PPP) Targeted Support missions conducted in 2023, 55% of the experts conducting missions were female. Additional analyses on gender in the PVS Pathway will be possible once the PVS IS is launched in 2024.

- PVS 2023 in a snapshot

The **PVS Pathway Programme** supported 62 WOAHA Members and two non-Members with 64 PVS activities (+11, with reference to 2022). Two sub-regional PVS Orientation Training Workshops took place in Jordan and Fiji, supporting WOAHA Members and non-Members in the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific, respectively. An in-person training course on Gap Analysis in People's Republic of China and a virtual training course on PVS for Russia were delivered upon request. Two pilot Preparatory Phases for a PVS Evaluation (1 remote and 1 in a third-party host country) were successfully tested with a principal output of a Provisional Report to be subsequently finalised. The newly developed methodology for Specific Content on ASF was successfully piloted. In line with the WOAHA Aquatic Animal Health Strategy activities to increase the use of the PVS Pathway in Aquatic Animal Health Services, the benefits of using the PVS Tool Aquatic were presented at two sub-regional PVS Orientation Training Workshops, and PVS Evaluations/Follow-Up Evaluations were conducted in Uzbekistan, Samoa and Mozambique.



**Figure 11.** PVS Pathway insights in 2023, as extracted from the PVS Information System

In terms of **Targeted Support**, three National Workshops on Workforce Development were conducted in Thailand, Laos and Vietnam and one PPP Targeted Support National Workshop in Sri Lanka; two Veterinary Paraprofessional (VPP) Curriculum Analysis missions were conducted in Kenya and Rwanda; 10 International Health Regulations (IHR)–PVS **National Bridging Workshops** (NBWs) and one rabies-focused NBW were conducted in Africa, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East.

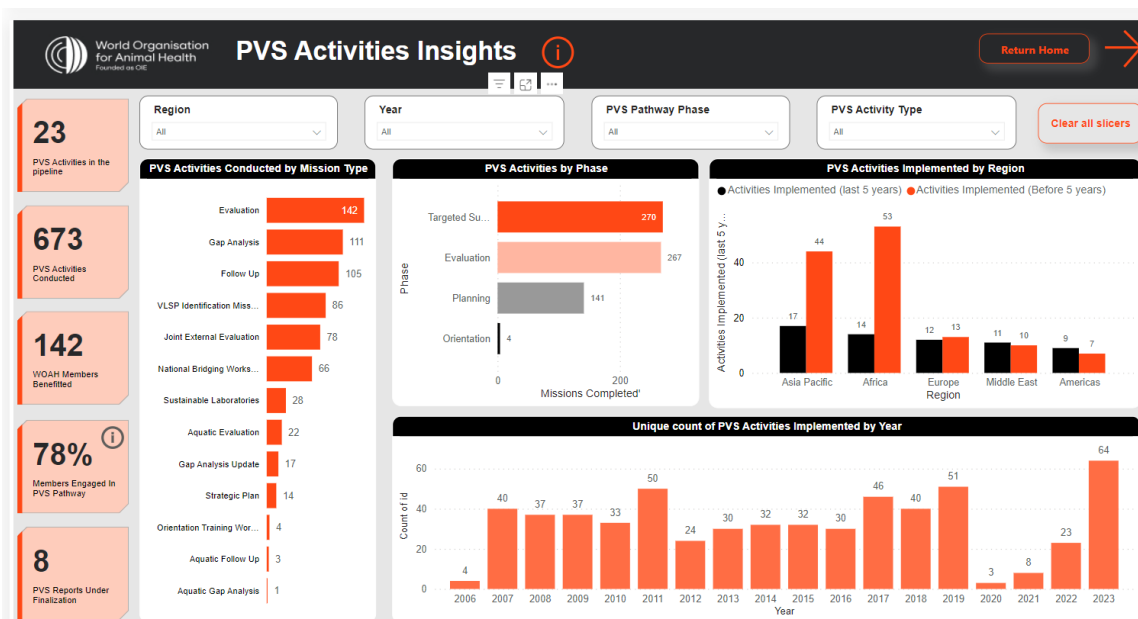


Figure 12. PVS Pathway Insights since its inception in 2007

- What's new in PVS?

**Strategic Planning Workshops** were held in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, which resulted in draft strategic plans to be adopted, as the culmination of significant engagement in the PVS Pathway. The key purpose of these workshops was to integrate and refine the Gap Analysis findings and recommendations into a widely understood and accessible strategic planning format via a structured template. Gap Analysis reports served as the main reference documents for their development. The next steps and actions taken rely on Members adapting, adopting and implementing the strategic plans to achieve their goals.

Throughout 2023, the **Veterinary Legislation Support Programme (VLSP)** tested several new methodologies, with the goal of enhancing this programme's impact by tailoring its approaches to better address Members' needs. In 2023, two Identification Missions, two Agreement Preparatory Phases and four Agreement Implementation Phases were conducted. New methodologies designed to enhance the VLSP standard methodologies to address specific tailored focus topics, including workforce development (WFD), wildlife, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and biological threat reduction (BTR), were applied and tested.

A pilot methodology focusing on **wildlife disease control** was tested during two Identification Missions. This methodology was designed in conjunction with the WOAH Wildlife Health Programme to assess the role and capability of the national Veterinary Services to detect and respond to a disease event in wild animals. The pilot methodology was appreciated by the two Members concerned, both of which regularly coordinate between the Veterinary Services and wildlife authorities on wildlife health issues.

WOAH, represented by its VLSP staff, worked with its Quadripartite partners to develop and launch the **One Health Legislative Assessment Tool (OHLAT) for Antimicrobial Resistance**. The OHLAT, which was developed by the Quadripartite with the financial support of the Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF), is designed to assist members with the review of legislation relating to AMR using a One Health approach and covering institutional arrangements (i.e. One Health coordination), human health, food safety, animal health and production, pesticides, plant health and the environment.

Renewed interest in legislation concerning **BTR** was generated through the launch of the FiraBioT project in March 2023. Within this project and until the end of 2025, the VLSP will further test, refine and strengthen its BTR-focused methodology, which is designed to review relevant national legislation regarding the role of the Veterinary Services in the mitigation of biological threats, including cooperation with other Competent Authorities.

The VLSP hosted two awareness-raising webinars based on a **review of legislation governing the veterinary workforce** from 50 Members in the Africa Region. During these webinars, experts presented the state of play of veterinary legislation in Africa and discussed common issues around legal drafting and the regulation of the veterinary profession, using success stories in the region. Similarly, the VLSP completed a review of legislation governing the control of zoonotic, transboundary and wildlife diseases in Southeast Asia, which will be presented to Members and regional intergovernmental organisations (e.g. ASEAN) in 2024.

An *ad hoc* Group drafted competency and curricula guidelines for **Community Animal Health Workers (CAHWs)**, and the final versions are expected in 2024. These guidelines will complement the WOAHA Guidelines on Competencies and Curricula for veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals. The CAHW Guidelines are expected to promote consistency in the training of CAHWs and to provide Veterinary Statutory Bodies (VSBs) with a framework for assessing the qualifications and training of CAHWs in those cases where consideration is given to registering them. The partnership with VSF International continues through an extension of its Cooperation Agreement for increased collaboration on CAHW integration, AMR, disease control efforts and One Health.

The **VPP Curricula analysis** missions, through continued piloting, provide clear roadmaps and recommendations for updating training curricula for VPPs delivered by universities and private and public training institutions.

Work on enhancing the **Sustainable Laboratories** Mission Toolbox to improve the outputs and outcomes of missions and the impact of recommendations by the *ad hoc* Group on Sustainable Laboratories was completed. Enhanced mission methodology and delivery included enhanced data collection procedures, roles, support, meetings, Gantt chart, communications, agendas and slide decks, all tested according to lessons learnt during pilot missions, and 30 PVS Laboratory Experts were trained in the application of new methodologies and tools. Lastly, mission manuals for countries and experts were finalised and made available to newly trained PVS Laboratory Experts.

**Public–Private Partnerships (PPPs)** were fully integrated into all PVS Evaluation and Follow-Up methodologies with specific PPP annexures in these PVS Reports. The methodology of PPP Targeted Support was developed in consultation with PVS Experts and WOAHA staff. Following a PVS Follow-Up Evaluation, a comprehensive PVS-PPP Targeted Support workshop was piloted in Sri Lanka. This PPP Targeted Support workshop had three components: preparation, workshop implementation and report submission.

The first **Regional workshop** on PPPs in the veterinary domain was held for the Middle East Region, which showcased strong interest and commitment to improving provision of veterinary services through PPPs. For English-speaking Members in the Africa Region, a dedicated session on PPPs was conducted during the training of national Focal Points for Aquatic Animals.

During the Africa continental commemoration of the 5th World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW 5), a **webinar on Public–Private Partnerships** highlighted how the public and private sectors can work together to combat AMR. The webinar included presentations from PPP experts and a panel discussion with national experts from public and private sectors, such as vaccine manufacturing, business cooperatives, producers and industry.

In Asia, the Private Sector Consultative Committee (PSCC) Virtual Meeting ‘Strengthening Coordination and engagement of Veterinary Services, and Private Sector to enhance Foot and Mouth Disease (FMD) Prevention and Control’ under the SEACFMD Initiative was held in March 2023, in which public and private stakeholders participated. During the 33rd Conference of the Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in New Delhi, India, from 13 to 16 November 2023, a dedicated side event on partnerships was organised in which public and private stakeholders participated.

### 2.3.2 Twinning Projects

- Laboratory Twinning

As of December 2023, 91 twinning projects had been completed since the start of the Programme in 2006, and 15 projects were underway. Among the completed projects, 12 institutions were designated as WOAHA Reference Laboratories and four as WOAHA Collaborating Centres. It is foreseen that up to 10 new laboratory twinning projects will start in 2024.

An evaluation of the Laboratory Twinning Programme was launched in 2022. Its main objective was to understand the long-term impact of laboratory twinning projects for candidates, the factors associated with project success and the sustainability of the outcomes that accrued during the twinning projects. Present and past participants in the Programme were involved in the evaluation in 2023 through a survey and a series of interviews. A feedback workshop will be held in June 2024, during which the preliminary results will be presented. The outputs of the evaluation are expected to be a tool to monitor ongoing laboratory twinning projects, a system to evaluate project success, a new twinning guidebook and a set of recommendations to improve the Programme.

- Veterinary Education Establishment Twinning

Veterinary Education Establishment (VEE) Twinning activities are ongoing between the University of Minnesota (United States of America) and the Samarkand Veterinary Institute in Uzbekistan, as well as between the University of Alberta (Canada) and Guru Angad Dev Veterinary and Animal Sciences University in India. The VEE Twinning Project between the Royal Veterinary College in London (United Kingdom) and the Jordan University Institute of Technology was completed in 2023 with two notable outcomes. Firstly, the lessons learnt and curriculum reforms developed through the VEE Twinning Project were shared broadly with nine veterinary educational establishments in seven countries of North Africa and the Middle East through the Mediterranean Network of Establishments for Veterinary Medicine, and, secondly, a mobile application on veterinary epidemiology was developed for field staff of the Jordanian Veterinary Services to support disease investigations in the field.

### 2.3.3 Platform for the training of Veterinary Services

In 2023, WOAHA achieved significant milestones in its endeavour to enhance Veterinary Services globally. Central to its capacity-building strategy, the **WOAHA Training System**, initiated in 2018, saw substantial progress during the year. The focus has been on strengthening core elements such as the WOAHA Competency-based Training Framework, the WOAHA Training Guidelines and the WOAHA e-learning production. The Terms of Reference of four Competency Packages are in the pipeline (notably Partnerships, Wildlife Health, Emergency Management and One Health). Learning needs assessment (LNA) guidelines to tailor Training Programmes to our Members' needs, aligning them closely with WOAHA standards, are currently under production and will be implemented in an information system connected to the PVS IS. A key achievement in 2023 was the progress made in the content development of more than 25 e-learning modules. These modules cover vital competencies in several areas, such as Veterinary Services leadership, emergency management, wildlife surveillance and trade, outbreak investigations, AMR, reptile animal welfare and ASF.



In collaboration with FAO and WHO, WOAHA has developed the Competencies for One Health Field Epidemiology (COHFE) Framework and training guidance to support programmes to incorporate One Health. The framework defines the knowledge, skills and competencies needed for field epidemiologists to implement the One Health approach. Four accompanying manuals provide guidelines on field epidemiology curriculum development, mentorship, learning evaluation and certification, and continuing education. The initiative is now evolving into a Quadripartite programme, the main purpose of which will be to test the framework in the field and encourage countries to include it into their roadmap for One Health implementation, coherently with the Quadripartite Joint Action Plan for One Health.



These efforts are part of WOAAH's commitment to integrate training as an essential component of the PVS Workforce Development Programme, reinforcing our commitment to advancing Veterinary Services globally.

#### 2.3.4 Sustainable laboratories

- Innovation to seek solutions to improve laboratory sustainability

Fully functional diagnostic laboratories play a critical role in global efforts to prevent, detect and respond to infectious disease outbreaks, but such facilities are often unsustainable due to high costs and technology barriers.

With financial support from Global Affairs Canada, WOAAH has been working with partners, including Chatham House, the UK International Biosecurity Programme and WHO to seek solutions to improve laboratory sustainability.

WOAH's goal has been to create a multisectoral coalition to address laboratory sustainability because of its importance for several sectors (health, security, development/philanthropy).

In 2023, WOAAH commissioned Grand Challenges Canada to assess the feasibility of finding solutions to improve laboratory sustainability through 'open innovation'. Advocacy material was also developed and presented at several meetings, including those of the Biologic and Toxin Weapons Convention and the WHO Technical Advisory Group on Biosafety.

In November 2023, key technical partners (innovation and laboratory experts) and potential investment partners were convened with a view to creating the coalition to take forward the initiative. The meeting was a success, with several regional bodies and potential investment partners joining an informal working group to take forward the next steps.

The coalition (provisionally named 'BIO-PREVAİL') will aim to reimagine laboratory infrastructure and to discover and deliver a new type of diagnostic laboratory that is purpose designed for operation and maintenance in low-resource environments. It aims to generate innovative solutions for laboratories to be operated in low-resource environments, with the objective of meaningfully and sustainably strengthening global health security.

- Biosafety Research roadmap

As part of WOAAH's work on sustainable laboratories, a technical working group delivered six scientific papers to support the implementation of evidence-based laboratory biological risk management. Following peer review, the papers were published as open access in *Applied Biosafety*. One of the papers provides an overview of the project: <https://www.liebertpub.com/doi/10.1089/apb.2022.0040>.

The other five papers provide a review of the evidence base to support commonly used biosafety measures for selected pathogens:

- [Bacillus anthracis and Brucella melitensis](#)
- [SARS-CoV-2](#)
- [Mpox/Monkeypox Virus](#)
- [Zoonotic Avian Influenza and Mycobacterium tuberculosis](#)
- [Shigella spp.](#)

The project has also delivered a 20-year review of laboratory accidents and laboratory escapes in human and animal health laboratories. The study itself and a commentary paper were published in *The Lancet Microbe* in December 2023. The papers call for more transparency around laboratory accidents to support biological risk management and ultimately mitigate against future accidents, and for greater investment in biosafety professionals.

[Investment in biosafety and biosecurity: the need for a risk-based approach and systematic reporting of laboratory accidents to mitigate laboratory-acquired infections and pathogen escapes – \*The Lancet Microbe\*](#)

[Laboratory-acquired infections and pathogen escapes worldwide between 2000 and 2021: a scoping review – \*The Lancet Microbe\*](#)

A joint WOAAH, WHO and Chatham House workshop also developed a paper that was aimed at high-level decision-makers and funders. It has been published as [a Chatham House paper](#).

## 2.4. Global frameworks

### 2.4.1 One Health

#### 2.4.1.1 *Strategic global context*

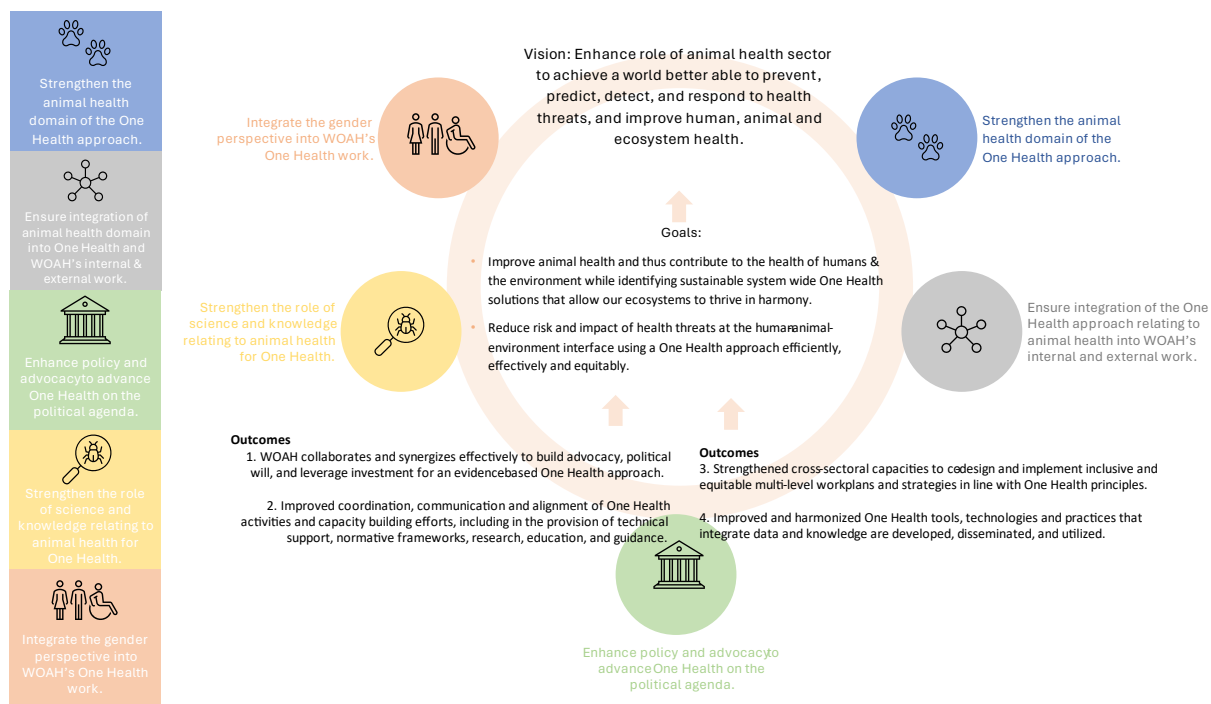
WOAH developed its **One Health (OH) strategy** with the vision of enhancing the role of the animal health sector to achieve a world better able to prevent, predict, detect and respond to health threats and improve human, animal and ecosystem health.

The goals of the Strategy are to:

- Improve animal health and thus contribute to the health of humans and the environment while identifying sustainable, system-wide OH solutions that allow our ecosystems to thrive in harmony.
- Reduce the risk and impact of health threats at the human–animal–environment interface using an OH approach efficiently, effectively and equitably.

To accomplish this, four medium-term outcomes are pursued:

- Medium-term Outcome 1: WOAAH collaborates and synergises effectively to build advocacy and political will, and leverage investment for an evidence-based OH approach.
- Medium-term Outcome 2: Improved coordination, communication and alignment of OH activities and capacity-building efforts, including in the provision of technical support, normative frameworks, research, education and guidance.
- Medium-term Outcome 3: Strengthened cross-sectoral capacities to co-design and implement inclusive and equitable OH work plans and strategies.
- Medium-term Outcome 4: Improved and harmonised OH tools, technologies and practices that integrate data and knowledge are developed, disseminated and used.



**Figure 13. WOAH One Health Strategy**

## Objectives for One Health at WOAH

### 1. Ensure integration of the animal health domain into the OH approach and into WOAH's internal and external work

Promote the OH approach throughout WOAH's work in areas such as AMR, vector-borne diseases, zoonotic diseases, emerging and neglected zoonotic diseases, wildlife health, disease intelligence, and capacity building. This will be done through the following:

- The OH Task Force established at Headquarters, which is chaired by the Director General and consists of six members representing the key areas of work (Capacity Building, AMR, Preparedness and Resilience and Engagement and Investment Departments, in addition to the OH Global Coordinator and the Deputy Director General for Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities).
- Regular meetings of the OH internal network, consisting of colleagues at Headquarters and in the regional and sub-regional offices.
- Regular monthly meetings with regional OH officers.
- The dedicated SharePoint set up to facilitate sharing of information internally.

For external work, WOAH is a key member of the Quadripartite collaboration on OH, together with FAO, UNEP and WHO, and will chair the secretariat for one year, starting in March 2024, which will mean an additional workload.

### 2. Strengthen the animal health domain of the OH approach

Following the launch of the global One Health Joint Plan of Action (OH JPA) in October 2022, which is intended to guide countries and partners to work together on One Health at all levels and across sectors to tackle interconnected health risks and protect the health of all species, **the OH JPA implementation guide** was developed, with the active contribution of WOAH, and was launched at COP28 in Dubai on 10 December 2023.



The Guide provides countries with practical steps on how to adopt and adapt the OH JPA through the three pathways of its theory of change:

- Pathway 1 – Governance, policy, legislation, financing and advocacy
- Pathway 2 – Organisational & institutional development, implementation and sectoral integration
- Pathway 3 – Data, evidence, information systems and knowledge exchange

These pathways should serve to implement all of the OH JPA's six Action Tracks: (i) Enhancing One Health capacities to strengthen health systems; (ii) Reducing risks from emerging and re-emerging zoonotic epidemics and pandemics; (iii) Controlling and eliminating endemic and neglected zoonotic and vector-borne diseases; (iv) Strengthening the assessment, management and communication of food safety risks; (v) Curbing the silent pandemic of AMR; and (vi) Integrating the environment into One Health. Each action track consists of a set of actions with specific activities with deliverables, and a timeline.

The Guide serves as a complementary operational addendum to the OH JPA, translating the objectives and high-level activities described in the OH JPA into national level contexts. The Guide follows a stepwise approach, outlining five essential steps to national OH JPA implementation. These five steps centre on conducting a situation analysis, followed by the establishment or enhancement of national multisectoral OH coordination mechanisms and the development or adaption of national OH action plans. The plans should build on and leverage existing initiatives, fostering a coherent integration process with clear roles and responsibilities for stakeholder groups, with the Quadripartite providing technical support where needed.

The guide is accompanied by two important documents developed at the request of the Quadripartite (QPT) by the OH High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) with thorough inputs from WOA: 1) the **OH tools review**; and 2) the **OH resources list**, arranged by pathway of change and by action track of the OH JPA.

The QPT has also developed the **One Health Guidance Note for UN Resident Coordinators and Country Teams** to incorporate the OH approach into relevant development initiatives and plans such as the UN Sustainable Development Cooperation Framework (UNSDCF), encompassing pandemic prevention, preparedness and response, health system strengthening, animal health and welfare, agrifood systems transformation and environmental conservation.

**A costing exercise of the OH JPA** was done in 2022 by the Quadripartite, led by its resource mobilisation task force. The exercise provides global figures with the expectation of development of country-specific needs and asks. It is estimated that US\$ 3.7 billion will be needed to implement the JPA, with the following costing assumptions:

- The indicative costs provided consider the four Organisations' costs for 5 years in 10 to 12 selected Members per year.
- Costing based on activities and partially on costs of some existing tools.
- The costs include:
  - i. Global and regional public goods – the global cost of delivering the evidence, guidance, tools and policy frameworks applicable at all levels.
  - ii. Country delivery – building a flexible envelope for country-level support, whereby the QPT support package will be designed and costed to meet country-specific needs, based on a thorough QPT OH diagnostic assessment.

The budget will be adjusted to include country-specific needs, on finalisation of the implementation plan and specific country plans.

The QPT resource mobilisation task force, led by the UNEP QPT Secretariat, is exploring different options to enable implementation of the OH JPA and to coordinate activities, including domestic and international funds, or collective and in-kind resources. Further discussions will be held in early 2024 to agree on suitable mechanisms, starting with identifying the Members to support per year to go through the five steps of implementation outlined in the implementation guide. Following this, QPT joint proposals for funding and costing for WOAAH in each country can be defined.

Meanwhile, the use of different sources of funding is underway, such as the USDA APHIS<sup>1</sup> (USA), GIZ<sup>2</sup> (Germany) and ISS<sup>3</sup> (Italy) grants to support relevant OH activities in selected countries. Upcoming grants include USDTRA funding support for the QPT zoonotic guide and its OH operational tools starting in Oct 2024, and Italy to support Action Track 3 of the JPA on neglected zoonotic and vector-borne diseases.

In 2023, WOAAH became an Observer member of the World Bank Pandemic Fund Board; however, unlike WHO and FAO, it is not an implementing entity. Discussions with these organisations and the World Bank are underway to clarify WOAAH's role as a delivery partner for certain projects. The Pandemic Fund has opened its second call for proposals. Interested [eligible countries, Regional Entities, and Implementing Entities](#) have been invited to submit proposals through an online portal starting in late February and remaining open until 17 May 2024. WOAAH is encouraging Veterinary Services to collaborate with their human health and other national counterparts on proposal submissions to ensure that animal health sector perspectives and needs are adequately reflected and thus financed.

3. *Enhance policy and advocacy to advance One Health on the political agenda*

- WOAAH maintains a regular dialogue and information flow to Members through the development and dissemination of briefing notes to keep them regularly updated on key OH issues and developments such as OH JPA implementation, the future WHO convention, agreement or other international instrument (CA+) – the so-called 'pandemic treaty' – and Pandemic Fund opportunities.
- WOAAH has developed six policy briefs in line with the six action tracks of the OH JPA, and they will be disseminated to WOAAH Delegates, networks and partners.
- The negotiations of the Pandemic international instrument:
  - WOAAH is the QPT's lead advocate on including OH in the pandemic treaty and coordinates with the OH Group of Friends, an informal group of Members' Permanent Representatives advocating for OH in Geneva. To this end, WOAAH manages the QPT discussions on the treaty text, submits joint statements and inputs on behalf of the QPT, and delivers them at meetings of the WHO Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB). WOAAH also participates as animal health subject matter expert in the informal sessions on OH and pandemic prevention.

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1 USDA APHIS: United States Department of Agriculture Animal and Plant Health Inspection Service

2 GIZ: German Agency for International Cooperation

3 ISS: Italian National Institute of Health

- In 2022, WOAH Members adopted a resolution recognising the importance of the Veterinary Services and, more broadly, the animal health sectors in the development of the international instrument for pandemic prevention, preparedness, and response under development by WHO.
- WOAH supports the OH Group of Friends with organising briefings for member countries. For example, WOAH organised two sessions in 2023 for the Group on OH economics and participated in the session on OH and trade.
  - WOAH actively engages with political fora such as G20, G7, Paris Peace Forum and UN General Assembly (UNGA) high-level meetings to advocate for and raise awareness of the OH approach, to help mobilise political willingness, resources and partnerships for OH and the animal health sector, as well as to provide platforms and opportunities to engage relevant stakeholders, including QPT representation in future high-level meetings related to OH.

Intergovernmental Negotiating Body (INB) and the pandemic instrument	UNGA high-level meeting on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response (PPPR)	Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) Leaders' Declaration on OH initiative	G20 engagement	G7 engagement
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•QPT provided inputs and technical support to the Bureau's draft of the Pandemic Accord to better position OH in the INB process and Pandemic instrument</li> <li>•The One Health Group of Friends, Consisting of Member States, also ensure a better reflection of OH in the INB and Pandemic Instrument</li> </ul>	<p><b>Political declaration on PPPR</b> was adopted by Heads of States and Governments during UNGA in September 2023</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Incorporates One Health and refers to the role of the Quadripartite</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•ASEAN leaders' declaration on One Health was adopted on 10 May 2023, highlighting the OH JPA, OHHLEP, and concrete deliverables for One Health implementation in ASEAN Countries</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•QPT Representation in high-level technical meetings on OH</li> <li>•Call to Action on 'Building One Health Resilience in the G20 Italy presidency in 2021</li> <li>• "Lombok OH Policy Brief" in the G20 Indonesia presidency in 2022</li> <li>•G20 New Delhi Leaders' Declaration 2023 reiterates commitment to OH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•G7 Nagasaki Health Ministers' Communique 2023 acknowledges the importance of implementing the OH approach</li> <li>• G7 Carbis Bay Health Summit 2021 requested that the Quadripartite conduct OHISS to strengthen One Health intelligence</li> <li>•G7 Chief Veterinary Officers' Forum</li> </ul>

**Figure 14. Advancing One Health in the political agenda**

4. Strengthen the role of science and knowledge relating to animal health for One Health

**Support for the One Health High-Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP)**

- WOAH supports the duties of the technical secretariat to OHHLEP hosted by WHO and its bureau and working groups, including coordination of meetings, preparation of working papers and other reports, as well as providing support for the coordination of the call for experts for the second term of OHHLEP, due to commence in 2024.

- WOAHA thoroughly reviews all recommendations and papers arising from the panel for the purposes of informing our work and providing inputs and feedback with a view to enriching them. For example, WOAHA provided inputs to the OHHLEP position paper 'The Panzootic Spread of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza H5N1 Sublineage 2.3.4.4b-A: Critical Appraisal of One Health Preparedness and Prevention'.

#### **Engagement in expert and *ad hoc* groups and scientific committees**

- The OH team actively engages in relevant WOAHA expert groups, including the Working Groups on Wildlife and the *ad hoc* Group on reducing the risk of emerging and re-emerging zoonotic diseases.
- WOAHA represents the QPT in the Scientific Committee for the OH Congress 2024, due to be held in South Africa in September 2024.

#### **Collaborating Centres for One Health**

The following institutions have expressed interest in joining this network of Collaborating Centres as WOAHA Collaborating Centres for One Health and initial discussions are being held to identify areas of work:

- Center for Global Health Science and Security, Georgetown University, Washington DC, United States of America, proposing a collaborating centre focused specifically on One Health governance and diplomacy.
- The One Health Centre of the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI), Nairobi, Kenya.

#### **Communication and knowledge sharing**

WOAHA communicates about One Health internally and externally, including through:

- Communication materials such as key messages, video scripts, social media posts, interviews, etc. For example, the Director General was interviewed for the World Health Summit 2023 on the following issues: 'Health is a Political Choice' and 'Reducing the risk of zoonotic disease spillover: from theory to practice'.
- One Health webinars: such as the QPT One Health Dialogue Series conducted throughout 2023.
- Scientific articles, for instance the recent article published in *Panorama* on wildlife and One Health.

#### **5. Integrate the gender perspective into WOAHA's One Health work**

Gender is an important consideration in the OH approach to ensure a positive impact at the social and population health dimensions, given that much of the agricultural work in low- and middle-income countries is done by women, and women are particularly vulnerable to zoonotic and vector-borne diseases due to increased exposure through their occupational and family roles. To address these issues, the OH team engages with the WOAHA Gender Task Force and, externally, with groups such as the Women for One Health Network and Women in Global Health.

##### **2.4.1.2 Strategic OH context at regional and sub-regional level**

Efforts are being made to **empower and strengthen QPT Regional Coordination Mechanisms** to drive the development of pilot projects of OH JPA implementation in full consultation with the countries concerned. Two regional workshops were held in 2023, the first in the Middle East Region in May and the second in the Asia and the Pacific Region in September, to discuss implementation and country engagement. Similar workshops will be conducted in the other regions in 2024.

Quadripartite regional coordination mechanisms are active in the Asia and the Pacific and Africa Regions. Efforts have been ongoing in the Europe Region since 2021 and got underway in the Middle East Region in 2023. In the Americas Region work was initiated in late 2023. Generic terms of reference and supporting documents and the QPT Memorandum of Understanding have been shared with regional offices for reference purposes.

In addition, the **regions are involved in the Quadripartite Executive Annual Meeting**, presenting their achievements in terms of OH Governance and Coordination mechanisms and OH-focused activities, describing the challenges they face with OH implementation, such as differences in QPT geographical and geopolitical coverage and lack of alignment of the OH agendas of other international partners at regional and country level, and detailing how they are endeavouring to overcome them.

**WOAH's Regions are prioritising OH technical items for their Regional Conferences**, with OH experts being engaged to develop the relevant reports, for example, the OH technical items at the Conferences of the Regional Commissions for the Middle East and Asia and the Pacific in 2023.

At regional and sub-regional level, WOAHA oversees multiple projects including, but not limited to, capacity-building activities such as National Bridging Workshops, Zoonotic Disease Prioritisation Workshops and workshops on the operational tools of the Tripartite Zoonotic Guide (Joint Risk Assessment; Multisectoral, One Health Coordination; Surveillance and Information Sharing; and Multisectoral Workforce Development).

#### **2.4.1.3 Antimicrobial resistance**

In 2023, actions to increase AMR **awareness and understanding** included the continuous update of our [AMR web portal](#) with targeted messages and advocacy materials. Two toolkits were published in 2023 as part of our AMR communication campaign: a social media [toolkit](#) and [guidance](#) on how to talk to people about AMR. These complete the series of previously published materials targeting Veterinary Authorities, aquatic animal health professionals, farmers, aquatic animal producers, as well as the feed and pharmaceutical industries. It is envisaged to expand this campaign to target pet owners and veterinarians in the field of companion animals, in collaboration with the World Small Animal Veterinary Association (WSAVA), with which WOAHA has an active [cooperation agreement](#). To start with, some testimonials of companion animal veterinarians dealing with AMR in their daily practices were published in our social media channels in 2023.

In 2023, in collaboration with our Quadripartite partners, we [rebranded](#) the global annual awareness campaign on AMR as World AMR Awareness Week (WAAW), disseminated aligned messages and jointly launched a Global AMR Media Alliance, a network of media from across sectors coming together to raise media awareness on this global health challenge. WOAHA implemented an outreach campaign to celebrate WAAW 2023 (18-24 November). This campaign was aimed at helping the general public understand the issue, while guiding animal health stakeholders on the actions they could take to tackle it. During WAAW, over 24,000 users visited WOAHA's AMR portal.

In 2023, a Quadripartite global and public consultation led to the definition of prioritised audiences to target, identifying young people as one of the main targets. A multisectoral [Working Group on Youth Engagement for AMR](#) was therefore created, including representatives of the animal health sector through members of the International Veterinary Students Association (IVSA). One of our main challenges being to increase awareness of the urgency at the political level, WOAHA, in collaboration with Quadripartite partners, has increased interactions with the [Global Leaders Group on AMR](#). In this respect, it is worth highlighting the [report on the global youth dialogue on AMR](#) and the ongoing work around a document specifying prioritised commitments on seven key priority areas, using specific and actionable language, for the upcoming United Nations (UN) General Assembly High-Level Meeting on AMR, planned for September 2024.

Actions to **strengthen surveillance** include completion of the global deployment of WOAAH's Animal Antimicrobial Use Global Database ([ANIMUSE](#)), which was made available to the public in September 2023 through a communication campaign. [Video interviews](#) with WOAAH staff and an [infographic](#) were produced to raise awareness of the benefits of the new platform. Around 14,000 users had visited the new interactive platform as of November 2023. During the eighth round of antimicrobial use (AMU) data collection, 62% of WOAAH Members reporting data used the ANIMUSE system for the entire process. This is an excellent adoption rate, which WOAAH will continue to support throughout 2024 by developing a range of video tutorials to be made available to Members for self-training. Noteworthy, an interactive digital report is now available in the ANIMUSE public portal, while the Member portal allows Members to analyse and visualise their data for easier use in decision-making. In December 2023, only 11% of our Members made their AMU data publicly available through ANIMUSE. WOAAH wishes to remind all Members of the importance of transparency, as indicated in [Chapter 6.9. of the Terrestrial Code](#), to allow all interested parties to assess trends, perform risk assessments and use the data for risk communication purposes.

Results from the seventh round of AMU data collection were [published in the Seventh Annual Report in May 2023](#). A total of 157 Members reported data to WOAAH, with more than three-quarters of them reporting quantitative data, enabling WOAAH to make global and regional analyses covering 70% of the world's domestic animal biomass. Results from the annual report indicated a 13% decrease in AMU (expressed in milligrams of antimicrobials per kilogram of animal biomass) between 2017 and 2019 based on the AMU data from 80 participating countries. This is the third consecutive decrease observed, and we congratulate all WOAAH Members for their efforts in reducing the use of antimicrobials in animals. However, there were signs of an increase in AMU in some regions (i.e. a 45% increase in the Africa Region and a 5% increase in the Americas Region), underscoring the need for sub-global level assessments. Therefore, it is important to remain vigilant. A [press release](#) to raise awareness of the findings of the report and a [summary factsheet were published](#).

Actions aimed at more comprehensive and accurate reporting of AMU in aquatic animals were strengthened in 2023. The actions included: reinforcement of WOAAH's ANIMUSE team with an expert in aquatic animal health; targeted Members selected for the training of aquatic animal health Focal Points for Animal Health on ANIMUSE; and closer support following the implementation of a more detailed questionnaire for AMU data collection. The number of Members reporting specific data for the sub-categorisation of aquatic food-producing animals and the inclusion of ornamental fish increased by 40% compared to the previous report. By December 2023, these data covered 63% of total aquatic animal production worldwide. Further collaboration from Members is requested so that we can collectively cover at least 80% of total production by 2025.

Even though significant progress has been made in reducing the use of antimicrobials for growth promotion, this practice is still reported by almost 20% of our Members. A survey carried out by WOAAH estimated that 76% of users did not carry out any preliminary risk analysis, despite this type of analysis being indicated in the [Global Plan of Action on AMR](#), and the recommendations of [WOAH's list of Antimicrobials of Veterinary Importance](#). More worryingly, no fewer than 11% of WOAAH Members still use as growth promoters at least one of the highest priority critically important antimicrobials for human medicine, such as colistin. Given these findings and the commitments made by WOAAH Members in 2016, WOAAH released a [statement](#) during WAAW 2023 calling on its Members to restrict the use of antimicrobials solely to veterinary medical use, and to actively engage in dialogue with the concerned parties to achieve a total ban on the use of antimicrobials as growth promoters, starting with those that are critically important for human health.



The next steps on ANIMUSE move us towards the institutionalisation of surveillance, supporting Members in their taking ownership of data collection, analysis and reporting. The prioritisation of this duty among all the competing priorities of Members is still a challenge. WOAHA is planning to support Members by building capacity on writing national reports, some of which are cross-sectoral, in collaboration with WHO, along the lines of the pilot scheme carried out in Senegal in July 2023.

Since 2021, WOAHA has continued its activities to support Members in their efforts to collect AMU data at farm/field level. The main highlights in 2023 were as follows:

- The publication of [WOAHA/FAO regional guidelines for monitoring AMU](#) at the farm level for the Asia and the Pacific Region.
- The launch of an Electronic Expert Group (EEG) to develop guidelines on monitoring AMU in aquaculture at field level. Composed of seven different experts around the globe, the EEG will develop these guidelines, in line with WOAHA standards, compiling relevant evidence and proposing standardised methodologies and tools. The final version of the guidelines is expected to be released in the second half of 2024.
- The compilation of an inventory of AMU field-level projects, assembling information on these projects from several sources: a literature review, discussions with WOAHA Focal Points for Veterinary Products during ANIMUSE training (Africa and Asia), and stakeholders such as Mott MacDonald and FAO. The current list of projects (n=81) was presented to the Working Group on AMR in March 2023. This activity slowed down due to other, concurrent priorities but is due to be completed in 2024, including final publication.
- In parallel, and during 2023, WOAHA followed the implementation of the pilot project in Ghana on AMU monitoring at field level being conducted within the framework of the AMR MPTF. A mobile data collection tool (Kobo Toolbox) has been adapted for field-level data collection purposes. Veterinarians and farmers have received training on how to use the tool.

Another activity that WOAHA has continued to strengthen in terms of surveillance is the setting up and testing of a global alert system to track substandard and falsified veterinary products (VSAFE pilot tool). Involving 42 WOAHA Members across all regions, pilot phase 2 included online reporting forms instead of MS Excel, translated into all three WOAHA official languages, as well as a SharePoint portal accessible to all pilot participants. This has enabled WOAHA Members to share information on the quality of the management of veterinary products, reports of suspect veterinary products and alert notifications. The VSAFE pilot tool also makes it possible to establish preliminary assessments of the global situation, such as:

- Twenty-six of the 42 participants have databases that include registered veterinary products and are publicly available. The list is available to participants to verify whether suspected unregistered products in their countries are authorised in other countries within the region.
- Forty participants have an authority for the registration and authorisation of veterinary products.



- Only three of the participants are known to have engaged in cooperation or coordination with another WOAAH Member to manage an incident involving a suspected substandard or falsified veterinary product (SFVP), and fewer than 45% of the Members enrolled are known to have a traceability system in place.

During this pilot phase, 10 participating Members submitted Immediate Notification Forms to WOAAH, resulting in 28 incident alerts affecting 57 veterinary products (VPs). Forty-three of the reported VPs referred to unregistered products, and five out of 14 reported SFVPs were antimicrobials. The monthly rate of country engagement ranged from 33.33% to 66.67%, monitored by Members submitting either an Immediate Notification or a monthly declaration of the absence of SFVPs.

Feedback from pilot phase 2 was gathered through different webinars, enabling the definition of key specifications for a future system to be developed and deployed. During the gathering of feedback, it was noted that the rates of engagement and the quality of reporting increased in countries where the national competent authorities under the Ministry of Health share details of incidents with the Ministry of Agriculture. This One Health mechanism received broad support from the participants at the 1st Global Joint Human and Veterinary Medicines Regulatory Summit. In the meantime, the pilot phase will continue throughout 2024, and will be open to all WOAAH Members. Strong links with WHO have been established and are helping the definition of joint actions.

Regarding actions to **strengthen research linked to AMR**, WOAAH has released, in collaboration with its Quadripartite partners, the [One Health AMR Research Priority Agenda](#). Different webinars are being organised to disseminate this important guiding tool for investment, research activities and planning for countries and funding bodies. The Agenda also serves as a guide for One Health AMR research, helping policy-makers, researchers and a multidisciplinary scientific community to work together on solutions that will prevent and mitigate AMR on a national, regional and global scale. Moreover, it prioritises areas to focus on: transmission, integrated surveillance, interventions, behavioural insights and change, and economics and policy. In addition, an equity lens with cross-cutting themes such as gender, vulnerable populations and sustainability was applied.

In light of the aforementioned High-Level Meeting on AMR during the upcoming UN General Assembly, WOAAH is strongly advocating for increased funding to be allocated to research & development (R&D) on vaccines and other alternatives to antimicrobials, diagnostics, and biosecurity engineering. In 2023, [only 7% of total funding allocated to R&D on AMR globally are dedicated to animal health](#). Efforts are being made through the financial task force launched by the Global Leaders Group, with the aim of increasing awareness at the political level. In parallel, WOAAH is actively engaged in the definition of potential targets for the future political declaration, one of them being related to a given percentage of countries having defined animal vaccination strategies according to [WOAH's priority list](#), with a funded implementation plan by 2030. In this respect, it is worth pointing out the report generated by STAR-IDAZ in 2022 on the priority research roadmap for the development of alternatives to antimicrobials.

Actions to **support good governance and capacity building** include continuous training on AMU, on AMR and aquatic animals, as well as on veterinary products other than antimicrobials (i.e. antiparasitic drugs, vaccines, etc.). WOAAH has started to transition towards the definition of outcome driven programmes, setting quantitative objectives to be achieved within a given time frame (i.e. collecting AMU data from aquaculture representing 80% of global production, piloting in four/five countries the implementation of responsible use of anthelmintic guidelines in grazing animals, etc.). An example of this is the training seminar held in Malawi on 5-7 September 2023. Attended by 21 WOAAH Members from all four sub-regions of Africa, it included a brainstorming session with Focal Points for Veterinary Products to identify and define priority outcomes sought by 2025. This is a major step in our evolution from reporting activities to driving change and reporting performance. Deployment is moving ahead, progressively, in all regions.

A series of in-person seminars was conducted in 2023, in close collaboration with our Regional and Sub-Regional Representations, to complete the deployment and implementation of the ANIMUSE interactive system (i.e. [Americas](#), [Asia and the Pacific](#), and [Middle East](#)).

In 2023, the focus was also on the development of five e-learning modules on the responsible use of antimicrobials in terrestrial and aquatic animals (general introduction to AMR; stewardships on AMR under a One Health approach; stewardship on AMR in terrestrial animals; stewardship on AMR in aquatic animals; and building a national AMR Action Plan focused on the terrestrial and aquatic animal health sector). The project kicked off in July 2023, and completion is expected during first semester of 2024.

A significant proportion of WOAHA's actions in supporting good governance and capacity building have been developed in its capacity as a core member of the Quadripartite on AMR, reinforcing WOAHA's position in the delivery of the Global Action Plan on AMR, within the One Health spectrum, in collaboration with our partners: FAO, UNEP and WHO. Major highlights for the year 2023 included:

- The continued implementation of a comprehensive Monitoring and Evaluation Framework for the Global Action Plan, initially published in June 2019, including a new cycle of the annual survey, known as the [Tracking AMR Country Self-Assessment Survey \(TrACSS\)](#). This includes a record breaking response rate for Members in southern Africa (16/16 Members).
- The organisation of, and support for, the first [Global Joint Summit of Human and Veterinary Medicines Regulatory Authorities to Preserve Antimicrobials](#), where a joint presentation by WOAHA and WHO on substandard and falsified medical/veterinary products led to a joint recommendation in the [final report](#).
- The completion of the English version of the [One Health Legal Assessment Tool](#), launched on 28 November 2023.
- The development of the [AMR Multi-Stakeholder Partnership Platform](#), as a part of the global governance structures on AMR. With more than 100 members by the end of 2023, organised in five different clusters, this collaborative coordination mechanism aims to be an inclusive, international and multi-stakeholder forum that convenes governments, UN entities and Specialised Agencies, global and regional intergovernmental organisations, international and regional financial institutions, philanthropic donors, civil society organisations and networks, academic and research organisations and private sector entities. The first plenary session took place in November 2023, establishing the first series of action groups.
- The continued development of [AMR-Multi-Partner Trust Fund \(MPTF\)](#) funded projects, at global and national level. The full [activity report for 2022](#) was published in May 2023. In December 2023, WOAHA took over as chair of the Steering Committee for the second time since the launch of this funding mechanism. In close collaboration with the other Quadripartite partners, the main priorities will focus on the mid-term review and the empowerment of the mechanism in light of the upcoming High-Level Meeting on AMR planned to take place on the sidelines of the UN General Assembly. As of December 2023, a total of 16 countries (Morocco, Kenya, Cambodia, Indonesia, Ghana, Zimbabwe, Ethiopia, Tajikistan, Peru, Senegal, Madagascar, Mongolia, Tunisia, Bangladesh, Cameroon and Kyrgyzstan), in different stages of project development, from implementation to closing, were being supported by the AMR MPTF. WOAHA's teams with the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations concerned have been strongly supporting Members throughout the project since its inception. This has included activities and achievements such as:

- The updating of National Action Plans in Senegal, Peru, etc.
- The development of a Regional workshop in Africa to share experiences and empower national collaborations in the region.
- The organisation of final consultation meetings among key stakeholders (i.e. Ministries of Health, Agriculture and Environment) to finalise the national AMR communication strategic plan for Cambodia, and the organisation of a stakeholder meeting to deliver project outputs, consult on project successes, lessons learnt and sustainability measures for future implementation in Indonesia.
- The implementation of projects in different countries, such as Tajikistan and Ghana, and the facilitation of public–private partnerships for responsible use of antimicrobials in terrestrial and aquatic animals in Peru.

Other support and capacity-building achievements worth highlighting were:

- The increase in national capacities in Argentina, Brazil, Chile, Colombia, Paraguay, Peru and Uruguay, as a result of support for the implementation of their National Action Plans, through the EU-funded project ‘Working Together to Fight Antimicrobial Resistance’, managed by FAO, PAHO and WOAAH.
- The [translation of key AMR communication documents](#) into Bahasa Indonesia, Burmese, Chinese, Dzongkha, Khmer, Malay, Mongolian, Nepali, Sinhala, Tamil, Thai and Vietnamese. This will enable dissemination and appropriation of the materials by countries in the Asia and the Pacific Region.
- The launch of collaborative work with other partners (i.e. Centre for Global Development [CGD], Institute for Health Metrics and Evaluation [IHME] in partnership with Global Research on Antimicrobial resistance [GRAM] [IHME/GRAM], RAND Europe and the World Bank) for the development of a report updating and generating new evidence on the health and economic burdens of AMR in the human and animal sectors, to make a case for investment in AMR/AMU, and inform the response and policy-making to curb AMR, using a One Health approach. WOAAH leads this project, serving as the secretariat for a Senior Advisory Group (SAG) established to advocate for, and influence investments in, AMR/AMU at relevant international events such as the UN General Assembly 2024 High-Level Meeting on AMR and with various governments and funding institutions. The project will complement other, similar, ongoing initiatives, such as the Quadripartite Technical Group on the Economics Case for AMR (QTG-EA) and the Global Burden of Animal Diseases (GBADs) in which WOAAH is participating.
- The publication, in February 2023, of the second edition of a [technical document](#) on how to set up a pharmacovigilance system for veterinary medicinal products, prepared in collaboration with HealthforAnimals within the framework of a public–private partnership with WOAAH and in alignment with VICH guidelines and international standards. This second edition incorporates reflections from WOAAH Focal Points for Veterinary Products following feedback on past regional training seminars.
- The publication, in July 2023, of a [peer-reviewed report](#) from webinars and workshops carried out the previous year around the implementation of the 3Rs principle (Refine, Reduce and Replace) for veterinary vaccines batch-release testing. This work was accomplished in collaboration with the Animal-Free Safety Assessment (AFSA) Collaboration, HealthforAnimals and the International Alliance for Biological Standardization (IABS).

- The co-chairing of the VICH Forum meeting, as part of WOAAH's associated member role in the International Cooperation on Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Veterinary Medicinal Products, including antimicrobials. The VICH Forum has continued to grow, with Egypt and Rwanda joining in 2023.

All the aforementioned actions are linked to the fourth pillar of [WOAH's Strategy on AMR](#): to **encourage the implementation of our international standards**. Activities and outputs specifically related to the update of our technical documents, guidelines and chapters in both the *Terrestrial Code* and the *Aquatic Code* are specifically reported in [Section 2.2.2.5.2](#) of this report: activities of the Working Group on AMR.

For further and more detailed information about WOAAH's activities on AMR, Members are invited to visit our Global AMR portal as well as the Regional and Sub-Regional Representation websites: [Africa](#), the [Americas](#), [Asia and the Pacific](#), [Europe](#) and the [Middle East](#).

#### 2.4.1.4 Rabies

WOAH plays a key role in supporting its Members in implementing dog-mediated rabies control and prevention activities, in line with [the Global Strategic Plan to end human deaths from dog-mediated rabies by 2030 \('Zero by 30'\)](#).

WOAH activities are coordinated by the Technical Rabies Network (TRN), an internal coordination mechanism to enhance communication and exchange on rabies-related activities between Headquarters and the Regional, and Sub-Regional Representations. Through the TRN, national points of contact for rabies in 49 countries were identified to lead and coordinate rabies activities for their countries.

- WOAAH rabies vaccine bank

The WOAAH vaccine bank provides WOAAH Members with access to high quality dog rabies vaccines at a fixed low cost, thereby acting as a catalyst for the implementation of mass dog vaccination programmes, a critical pillar of effective rabies control strategies. In 2023, a total of 1.12 million vaccine doses were delivered to nine countries in Africa (Namibia, Eritrea, Côte d'Ivoire, Cameroon, Ghana, Central African Republic, and Guinea) and Asia (Indonesia and Cambodia). Additionally, as an emergency response to a rabies outbreak in West Timor, Indonesia, WOAAH delivered 200,000 vaccine doses. There is ongoing work to update the process for requesting vaccines and reporting vaccine use to streamline this for Members and maximise the impact of the vaccine bank.

- Oral rabies vaccines

For free-ranging dogs, oral rabies vaccination (ORV) could be instrumental in the global effort to combat canine rabies and has the potential to significantly impact progress towards 'Zero by 30,' the global strategic plan. WOAAH continues to invite Members to consider using oral rabies vaccines as a complement to parenteral vaccines and has been supporting scientific studies in Thailand, Indonesia and Namibia. Indonesia has registered oral rabies vaccines and ORV forms part of the country's official rabies control programme. In Namibia, the third and final oral rabies vaccine trial in the Zambezi region was successfully completed in 2023.

- Support for the development and implementation of regional and national control programmes for the elimination of dog-mediated rabies

WOAH is committed to assisting Members with developing and implementing sustainable and One-Health-based national control programmes for the elimination of dog-mediated rabies. This is being achieved with the support of donors, notably in the Southern African Development Community (SADC) and the Economic Community of Central African States (ECCAS). The project on [Rabies Control and Elimination \(RACE\) in Cameroon](#) was launched in 2023, the aim being to augment rabies surveillance, dog vaccination and human post exposure prophylaxis in two pilot areas and later to scale

up efforts across the country. Namibia also made significant progress in rabies elimination efforts in 2023 by vaccinating approximately 100,000 dogs in the eight regions of the Northern Communal Areas (NCA), marking a 49.95% increase in vaccinations from 2022; the vaccination drives were complemented by regular community awareness programmes through television and radio, and by capacity-building programmes for animal health technicians on dog capture, vaccination and monitoring. WOAAH has undertaken rabies situational and gap analyses for Central African Republic, Chad and Democratic Republic of the Congo. These assessments have identified specific areas requiring attention and lend support for the elimination of rabies in 2024.

WOAH assisted Zimbabwe and Cambodia with updating their national strategic plans. WOAAH remains committed to providing support and assistance to the Members in enhancing their strategies for dog-mediated rabies control. WOAAH, in collaboration with other members of the Quadripartite and ASEAN, supported the update of the [ASEAN Rabies Elimination Strategy \(ARES\)](#), which was endorsed by the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group for Livestock and ASEAN Health Cluster 2.

WOAH also collaborated with the Asia Pacific Cities Alliance for Health and Development (APCAT) on the implementation of a [rabies control project in Bali](#), Indonesia to vaccinate over 90% of the estimated 600,000 dogs by the end of 2023. The project, running from July 2022 to December 2023, achieved significant milestones, including the development of leadership capability of the local authority of Bali for rabies prevention, identification of local resources, utilisation of vaccines from the WOAAH vaccine bank and successfully securing funding commitments for vaccination campaigns in 2023 from provincial and local governments. The project also enhanced partnerships among stakeholders and governments, in particular with the Ministry of Agriculture, Ministry of Health, the Provincial government of Bali, and local government at the city and district levels.

[Zambia's official control programme](#) for dog-mediated rabies was formally endorsed by the Assembly during the 90th General Session, Zambia thus becoming the third Member, after Namibia and the Philippines, to have its official control programme formally endorsed by WOAAH.

WOAH continues to improve Members' capacity to manage dog populations. In Europe, an updated version of the Self-Assessment and Monitoring Tool for Dog Population Management (SAM4DPM) was launched in 2023, with the aim of enhancing Members' capacity to monitor and self-assess compliance with WOAAH standards on dog population management and align with the 'Zero by 30' initiative. The tool was also presented at the Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East. This collaborative initiative seeks to tackle the existing rabies challenges in the region, improve understanding of leveraging WOAAH support and, in particular, draw insights from European experiences in dog population management using the SAM4DPM tool.

Throughout the year, WOAAH organised and supported several virtual and in-person training courses, to improve the capacity of Veterinary Services to control dog-mediated rabies, with a special emphasis on rabies diagnosis and surveillance, and to improve rabies surveillance by Members. These training initiatives included the following:

- A three-day training course for the Mediterranean Animal Health Network (REMESA: Réseau Méditerranéen de Santé Animale) was organised in collaboration with IZSVe-Padova, Italy (FAO Reference Laboratory for Rabies). Training covered the following topics: laboratory diagnosis; the use of geographic information systems (GIS) to support rabies control activities and surveillance; epidemiological investigations and Integrated Bite Case Management (IBCM); and safe handling and capture of dogs;



- A regional information sharing meeting for molecular epidemiology techniques (MET) for rabies, led by the WOAHA Reference Laboratory for Rabies at CVRI, People's Republic of China;
- The fourth WOAHA Regional Workshop on dog population management, held in Tbilisi, Georgia;
- Hands-on training sessions on animal and human rabies diagnosis were organised for laboratory personnel from the National Veterinary Laboratory (LANAVET) and the Cameroon Pasteur Centre (CPC) by the Institut Pasteur, in Cameroon;
- A one-week hands-on training course aimed at strengthening the capacity of laboratory personnel from the animal and human health sectors on surveillance and management of rabies cases, as well as on sample collection, packaging and shipping to the laboratory; first phase of the international course on rabies from July to September 2023, in which 41 trainees (22 from Cameroon and 19 from other ECCAS countries) participated.

- Communication

Over the past year, WOAHA has devoted considerable efforts to creating communication resources aimed at enhancing awareness about rabies. These materials are designed to reach a broad spectrum of stakeholders, including veterinarians, community members and pet owners. They cover a range of topics, including community awareness, responsible dog ownership and effective dog population management. Additionally, outreach campaigns were conducted throughout the year aimed at leveraging social media channels to enhance the dissemination of these [tools](#) and increase awareness on rabies. On 28 September 2023, World Rabies Day, WOAHA used this opportunity to highlight, through social media platforms and participation in global events, the tools and support available for rabies elimination.

- Rabies diagnostic support

The WOAHA Rabies Reference Laboratory Network (RABLAB) consists of 12 WOAHA Reference Laboratories and one affiliate laboratory which support Members through the promotion of standardised and harmonised laboratory techniques (in line with the WOAHA *Terrestrial Manual*), the improvement of routine rabies diagnosis and testing, support for rabies surveillance, reporting and data dissemination, and capacity building, training and workshops. Key outputs in 2023 included guidelines on the '[Production of in-house \(internal\) positive control serum for rabies antibody testing](#)' and the '[RABLAB statement on the use of commercial rapid immunochromatographic tests](#)'. Ongoing activities include the drafting of a statement on the importance of using high-quality dog rabies vaccines and supporting the United Against Rabies Forum Country Partnership Programme.

In 2023, four virtual meetings were held, and the second in-person meeting of the network took place at FAO Headquarters in Rome, Italy, on 8 November 2023.

- United Against Rabies Forum: Implementing 'Zero by 30'

The United Against Rabies Forum, hosted by WOAHA and led by FAO, WHO and WOAHA, now includes more than 60 members. This network was launched in 2020 to implement the objectives set out in 'Zero by 30'.

During the reporting period, four virtual webinars took place: '[Rabies surveillance: what gets measured gets done](#)'; '[Oral Rabies Vaccination](#)'; '[Voices for Change: the power of communication for rabies control](#)'; and '[Eliminating dog-mediated rabies: addressing barriers to scaling up dog vaccination campaigns](#)'. Five newsletters were disseminated to a mailing list of more than 1,700 stakeholders throughout the year, highlighting key outputs and resources of the network. These outputs can also be found highlighted in the 2023 United Against Rabies Review, and on the [United Against Rabies Forum website](#).



Key outputs of the network in 2023 included the following: A [‘Call to Action’](#) to Gavi the Vaccine Alliance, which contributed to the successful unpausing of the Gavi strategy to invest in human post-exposure prophylaxis for countries; [‘Oral vaccination of dogs against rabies: Recommendations for field applications and integration into dog rabies control programmes’](#), which provides guidance for practical implementation of oral rabies vaccination as an integrated tool in national strategies to control rabies in free-roaming dog populations; the [‘Rabies Public Information Toolkit’](#) to help human and animal health authorities inform the public about rabies and encourage responsible dog ownership, health-seeking behaviour, dog vaccination and reporting of suspected rabies cases; [‘Dog vaccination – barriers and solutions’](#), which provides guidance and tools that can help stakeholders overcome barriers to mass dog vaccination; and the [‘Rabies Today’ podcast](#), a six-episode podcast series aimed at improving advocacy for rabies control.

The [2023 United Against Rabies Forum Stakeholder Meeting](#) was held as a hybrid event, with in-person participation in Rome, Italy, and virtual participation to allow inclusive participation of United Against Rabies Forum members. The meeting provided an update on progress towards the ‘Zero by 30’ goal and enabled United Against Rabies Forum members to review the outputs of 2023 and propose priorities for the network to focus on in 2024.

In 2024, the United Against Rabies Forum will prioritise activities that directly contribute to the following objectives: engaging priority rabies-endemic countries and support development and implementation of National Strategic Plans; engaging local authorities and communities to prioritise rabies elimination at the local level; facilitating access to human post-exposure prophylaxis (PEP), including supporting the implementation of the Gavi strategy on rabies; promoting improved surveillance, data sharing and data reporting; and supporting advocacy and resource mobilisation for rabies control.

#### **2.4.1.5 Tuberculosis**

WOAH continues to take the lead in identifying a suitable replacement for the depleted international standard bovine and avian tuberculin. The WOA *ad hoc* Group on the replacement of the international standard bovine and avian tuberculin met virtually on a regular basis to discuss the protocols and the results of the ongoing trials to calibrate the candidate standards of bovine tuberculin.

In December 2023, WOA launched a call to solicit donations of candidate avian tuberculin from private companies and manufacturers to be evaluated as a potential replacement for the current standard.

WOAH met regularly with FAO and WHO to coordinate activities linked to the implementation of the [Roadmap for zoonotic tuberculosis](#) and participated in the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease conference held in Paris in November 2023. To further contribute to the roadmap for zoonotic tuberculosis, WOA launched a consultancy project on the development of guidelines for alternative strategies to control *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* complex infection in livestock. These guidelines would be instrumental to support resource-limited countries with a high burden of animal tuberculosis.

#### **2.4.1.6 Middle East respiratory syndrome (MERS)**

WOAH, in collaboration with FAO, UNEP and WHO, organised a technical meeting on MERS-CoV and other emerging zoonotic coronaviruses in Riyadh, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, in November 2023. The meeting brought together public health and animal health experts from affected and at-risk countries, academic scientists and subject matter experts to review the latest scientific evidence on MERS-CoV, examine country experiences and enhance multi-sectoral collaboration. The meeting facilitated the discussion of the One Health approach for MERS-CoV and emerging zoonotic coronaviruses and identified priority actions and future research needs for the continued advancement in the prevention and control of the disease.

#### **2.4.1.7 Emerging diseases**

For the first time, WOAAH convened an *ad hoc* Group on emerging diseases (including re-emerging diseases) and drivers of disease emergence in animals. This is an ad hoc group with two functions: a business-as-usual function and a response function. The business-as-usual function includes defining WOAAH's role in evaluating emerging diseases and their drivers for emergence at the human animal interface and identifying needs and gaps. The response function aims to provide support for WOAAH (including WOAAH's Members and partners) during a major emerging disease event. During its first meeting (5-8 December 2023) the Group identified high-level gaps in WOAAH's approach to emerging diseases at the human animal interface and made recommendations to WOAAH on filling these gaps. The Group also agreed on the following four deliverables to take forward during 2024: 1. Identification of gaps in WOAAH's approach to emerging diseases at the human animal interface. 2. A twice-yearly high-level global prioritisation of emerging infectious diseases. 3. A position paper on emerging diseases, highlighting needs, gaps and solutions. 4. An investment case for WOAAH (and its Members) to address emerging infectious diseases.

#### **2.4.1.8 Wildlife health**

The implementation of WOAAH's Wildlife Health programme maintained its momentum in 2023 with significant progress and achievements at global and regional levels in six focus areas, as described below.

- Collaboration and partnerships

Productive partnerships were sustained with the Convention on International Trade in Endangered Species of Wild Fauna and Flora (CITES), the International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN), the International Council for Game and Wildlife Conservation (CIC), the Nature for Health (N4H) initiative, the Collaborative Partnership on Sustainable Wildlife Management (CPW) and UNEP.

WOAH's Collaborating Centre network for wildlife held its first meeting on 20-21 November 2023. Comprised of WOAAH Collaborating Centres for Wildlife Health and other interested specialised centres, the network was designed to be flexible yet responsive to WOAAH and its Members' requirements. The network structure includes a Secretariat, Core Leadership Team, General Body and Co-chairs. The Core Leadership Team will be responsible for guiding the network's establishment and activities during the first year, while the General Body will volunteer expertise based on availability and interest. The Co-chairs and the Secretariat will ensure the smooth running of the network.

At a regional level, WOAAH's Asia and the Pacific Region organised regular wildlife health regional and sub-regional network meetings.

WOAH's active participation in N4H, a project led by a consortium consisting of WOAAH, UNEP, IUCN, WHO, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), with the support of German Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, Nuclear Safety and Consumer Protection (BMUV), EcoHealth Alliance, and the Convention on Biological Diversity (CBD), led to funding being mobilised for a national project in Mongolia. The project is due to be implemented in collaboration with WOAAH, the CIC, FAO and the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS). This highlights WOAAH's capacity to operationalise international partnerships and mobilise resources for the benefit of its Members.

- Capacity building

In 2023, seminars for national Focal Points for Wildlife were organised in three of WOA's Regions (Europe, Asia and the Pacific and the Americas), following on from the seminar conducted for the Africa Region in December 2022. The seminars reached out to more than 100 national Focal Points. Other partners and stakeholders were also invited to sessions on wildlife disease management. The 6th cycle training manual, which had been developed by the WOA Collaborating Centre on Wildlife Health (United States of America), was used as a foundation for these training seminars. The participants were exposed to multiple topics, including wildlife health management and systems thinking.

The development of two e-modules on wildlife surveillance and two e-modules on wildlife trade was initiated to support implementation of guidelines (see below).

- Guidelines and standards

In May 2023, a first draft of guidelines to reduce the risk of disease spillover in wildlife trade was provided by the WOA *ad hoc* Group on reducing the risk of disease spillover events at markets selling wildlife and along the wildlife supply chain. Further input was provided by the WOA Collaborating Centre for Risk Analysis and Modelling (United Kingdom). The final draft guidelines are due to be piloted at a workshop in Thailand in March 2024 and then finalised for publication. WOA has been in close contact with WHO to ensure consistency with guidance that WHO is developing on risk management in traditional markets.

In 2023, the IUCN/WOA guidelines on wildlife surveillance were being updated in collaboration with IUCN and the revised document is due to be published and disseminated in 2024.

Following the findings of a wildlife legislation review conducted in 2022, a questionnaire on wildlife legislation to support PVS VLSP missions was tested in two countries (Guyana and Rwanda). Feedback from these missions was then used to assess the utility of the questionnaire and improve it for subsequent missions where wildlife health was relevant. This was a first step in addressing gaps in legislation in wildlife health management, and eventually to closing gaps in the *Code* chapter on legislation.

- Wildlife health data management

The scoping phase of a project to define the objectives, needs and opportunities for a Next-Generation Wildlife Health Information System (NG-WHIS) for reporting non-listed wildlife diseases was carried out in 2023. This system would replace WAHIS-wild which had been decommissioned. Scoping included consultation across relevant WOA departments (WOA Synergetic group for NG-WHIS: 8 departments involved); surveying WOA Members (an in-country survey on wildlife health data management and information systems [216 answers were received from 145 countries and territories]); surveying Wildlife Health Information System managers (16 answers); and the *ad hoc* Group for NG-WHIS.

The outcomes of this scoping work suggested that there was a need for a centralised system, optimising the sensitivity of data collection, and providing (close to) real-time information. To achieve early warning and high sensitivity, consideration would need to be given to the collection and dissemination of non-validated data. The system should have benefits for stakeholders, be user friendly (not increase workload) and would benefit from having multisectoral governance (e.g. environment, Veterinary Services, wildlife health authorities, public health).

In addition, information on WOAAH-listed diseases affecting wildlife species was valorised with a monthly situation report produced by the Data Integration and Preparedness and Resilience Departments and published on the [WOAH Wildlife online portal](#). The report emphasised the effect of wildlife diseases on the conservation of biodiversity.

While scoping the definitive reporting solution for non-WOAH-listed diseases, the Preparedness and Resilience Department contributed to the training of national Focal Points for Wildlife for the temporary platform WAHIS-Wild beta and followed the reporting process through this platform with the World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department.

- Science and knowledge

At regional level? the EBO-SURSY project, which is ending in 2024, organised a 3-day scientific symposium to showcase the results of 6 years of scientific investigations in West and Central Africa on viral haemorrhagic fevers. The symposium gathered 135 participants, including international and national project stakeholders and partners, and was a great opportunity for both PhD students and senior scientists involved in the project to present their findings. The 58 abstracts were published in the journal *Virologie*. Veterinary Services from the 10 target countries were in attendance and, in a back-to-back two-day workshop, were able to debrief with scientists on how these results could be translated into practical recommendations to support their protocol of surveillance.

In addition, the project supported Sierra Leone, Republic of the Congo, Central African Republic, Côte d'Ivoire and Cameroon to finalise and validate with a One Health approach their national protocols of surveillance for Rift Valley fever and Lassa fever, while supporting its implementation through a few activities (training sessions and translation of tools into the local language).

- Communication

WOAH's wildlife health communication strategy was finalised in September 2023. Subsequently, a series of communication products (videos, targeted social media campaigns, etc.) were developed to support WOAHA's change of narrative to embrace all (domestic and wild) animal health. A good example of this is [a video about the impact of avian influenza on ecosystems](#). Social media posts featuring wildlife products or project results are the most consulted by the public, which shows the interest of our audience for this topic. In addition, a webinar featuring a panel discussion with speakers from the EcoHealth Alliance, the Wildlife Conservation Society (WCS) and the Wildlife Disease Association (WDA), was organised for World Wildlife Day (CITES Initiative) to discuss the question 'Wildlife health: what is at stake?'. The event was attended by more than 400 participants from 83 countries. In parallel, the Asia and the Pacific Region supported the organisation of national events in relation to the 2023 World Wildlife Day theme 'Partnerships for Wildlife Conservation' in Laos, Nepal and Singapore.

Finally, through the EBO-SURSY project, a second radio campaign was organised in Democratic Republic of the Congo to raise awareness of the risks associated with zoonotic diseases. The campaign reached out to nearly 3 million people in both rural and urban areas, with excellent feedback from communities.

Work was also carried out on an upcoming *Panorama* issue on the theme Wildlife Health and Biodiversity, due for release in early 2024.

## 2.4.2 Transboundary animal diseases

### 2.4.2.1 Strategic global context

The Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs) is a coordination mechanism that was established between FAO and WOAHP in 2004 at global and regional levels with their main technical and resource partners to coordinate efforts for the control of transboundary animal diseases (TADs), focusing on priority diseases but also considering cross-cutting activities.

#### GF-TADs at global level

The GF-TADs Management Committee (MC) is the decision-making body of GF-TADs. In 2023, the Management Committee was co-chaired by Dr Jean-Philippe Dop (WOAH's Deputy Director General for Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities at WOAHP) and Dr Keith Sumption (Chief Veterinary Officer at FAO). The Management Committee is guided by the Global Steering Committee (GSC), gathering stakeholders from public and private sectors from all regions. The Global Secretariat, led by the FAO global coordinator and supported by the WOAHP regional coordinator and FAO global facilitator, supports the Management Committee in organising all GF-TADs global level activities that are not covered by disease groups and coordinates with disease groups as well as with GF-TADs actors at regional level. In 2023, five Management Committee meetings took place and discussed pertinent issues on coordination related to disease-specific strategies and cross-cutting subjects. The GSC and the Management Committee benefit from the support of the Global Secretariat, hosted by FAO, which includes a part-time liaison officer from WOAHP's Regional Activities Department who also acts as GF-TADs global coordinator.

Since the end of 2021, GF-TADs has been implementing the [GF-TADs Strategy for 2021-2025](#), organised around three main objectives:

- Establish strategies for priority TADs at the sub-regional, regional and global levels.
- Develop and maintain capacities to prevent and control TADs.
- Improve the sustainability of strategies to control priority TADs through multi-disciplinary partnerships.

The main activities, outcomes and outputs of [GF-TADs](#) at global level are published on its website; Since 2021, the GF-TADs annual report has been presented to the Global Steering Committee ([GSC 13 annual activity report](#)) and provides high-level [recommendations](#).

In order to guide the Management Committee on the third objective of the GF-TADs Strategy, a partnership and financing panel (PFP) has been established, which includes representatives from financial institutions, private organisations working on animal health service provision and individual experts with a background in agriculture economics, virology and veterinary services. The PFP is developing an approach that includes stakeholder mapping, support for advocacy and advice on resource mobilisation. The main aim is to strengthen a system approach that will encourage the development of cross-cutting capacity building in support of TAD-specific strategies. This approach is due to be operationalised in 2024 subject to the availability of resources.

#### GF-TADs at regional level

The GF-TADs Regional Steering Committees (RSCs), under the leadership of their respective chairs, coordinate the main stakeholders of the five regions to support global and regional priority TAD activities. RSCs are supported by GF-TADs Regional Secretariats, each led by the relevant WOAHP Regional Representation with support from FAO GF-TADs regional teams.

GF-TADs activities in the respective regions continue to be carried out on the priority diseases.

Regional GF-TADs activities are presented in the dedicated section of the WOAHP regional websites and organised by priority TADs.

**Table 4. Regional Steering Committee meetings and the respective priority TADs addressed**

Region	Priority TADs	Latest RSC Meeting (as of 31 December 2023)
<a href="#">Africa GF-TADs</a>	FMD, PPR, ASF, CBPP and Rift Valley fever	June 2022
<a href="#">Americas GF-TADs</a>	FMD, ASF, classical swine fever, avian influenza, rabies and screwworm.	September 2022
<a href="#">Asia - Pacific - GF-TADs</a>	ASF, FMD, PPR, LSD and avian Influenza	February 2023
<a href="#">Europe GF-TADs</a>	FMD, ASF, PPR, LSD, rabies and avian influenza	October 2022
<a href="#">Middle East GF-TADs</a>	FMD, PPR, RVF and brucellosis	May 2023

The 12th Meeting of the RSC for Asia-Pacific led to the adoption of a [new regional strategy](#) aligned with the global strategy and addressing more specifically priorities in the different sub-regions. Consequently, dedicated coordination meetings were held for [South Asia](#) and [the Pacific, respectively](#). The 10th Meeting of the RSC for the Middle East, held on the margins of WOAHP's 90th General Session, was the occasion to nominate the Delegate of Saudi Arabia as the new chair and to decide on a revision of the regional priorities to be conducted in 2024. The nomination of the new Director of the African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (AU-IBAR) was an opportunity to commend and strengthen the engagement of AU-IBAR as chair of the GF-TADs in Africa.

In Europe, recognising the need for enhanced coordination in a challenging period, the WOAHP, as GF-TADs Secretariat for this Region instituted a new mechanism in collaboration with FAO and the European Commission's Directorate General for Health and Food Safety (DG SANTE). This mechanism includes quarterly coordination meetings, a comprehensive plan of action and a repository of field projects and joint activities. The objective is to deliver significant outcomes and provide robust support to Members, prioritising diseases of the utmost concern in the region. This strategic approach reflects a commitment to adaptability and collaboration in addressing evolving animal health challenges.

Most of the regional GF-TADs platforms have established Standing Groups of Experts (SGE) to engage Members, partners and experts on priority diseases (ASF, HPAI, lumpy skin disease [LSD], contagious bovine pleuropneumonia [CBPP], rabies), to exchange knowledge and to agree on priorities to build capacity and coordinate activities. The launch of the [SGE for CBPP in Africa](#) illustrates how the GF-TADs mechanism has helped to renew momentum on combating this disease with its huge economic impact and AMR implications; the SGE agreed on six concrete priority areas for the next two years.



Other coordination mechanisms include the regional roadmaps for FMD and PPR. In order to promote a synergistic approach, joint FAO/WOAH roadmap meetings were successfully held for [West Eurasia](#), addressing FMD and PPR, and for [South Asia](#), addressing FMD, PPR and LSD. A similar approach was also used for a WOA coordination meeting in [East Asia](#) on PPR and LSD. In Europe, the meeting of the [SGE on LSD-12](#), held in March 2023, recognising the good experience of South-East Europe Members in tackling LSD, decided to develop a similar approach in Central Asia countries in the future.

#### **2.4.2.2 Avian influenza**

In light of the ongoing global avian influenza crisis, WOAH hosted its first [Animal Health Forum](#) (AHF), fully dedicated to the disease, during the 90th General Session. [The Animal Health Forum 'Policy to Action: The case of avian influenza – Reflections for change'](#) provided an opportunity for open discussions among Delegates, subject-matter experts and relevant stakeholders on how best to address current challenges in the global control of HPAI. The Technical Item, entitled '[Strategic Challenges in the Global Control of High Pathogenicity Avian Influenza](#)', presented at the General Session set the stage for the AHF, and WOAH Members adopted [Resolution No. 28](#) to serve as the basis for shaping future avian influenza control activities. The Resolution underscores the importance of Members' respecting and implementing WOAH international standards to effectively combat avian influenza.

A two-year Resolution No. 28 framework (June 2023 – May 2025) was designed in consultation with key WOAH stakeholders to define the activities, outputs and expected outcomes to implement the recommendations of the adopted resolution and ensure alignment with the future GF-TADs avian influenza global strategy.

- OFFLU (WOAH-FAO network of expertise on animal influenza) and WOAH scientific network activities

WOAH continued to coordinate the WOAH/FAO network of expertise on animal influenza (OFFLU), while also hosting the OFFLU Secretariat and maintaining the [OFFLU website](#).

In 2023, in response to the global surge in avian influenza outbreaks, the OFFLU network was active in exchanging data, publishing scientific statements to address emerging animal influenza threats and conducting risk assessments. The network regularly contributes to WHO influenza vaccine composition meetings. The OFFLU [avian influenza matching \(AIM\)](#) pilot project was completed to provide information on the antigenic characteristics of circulating viruses to facilitate the selection of appropriate vaccines for poultry and the updating of poultry vaccine antigens in places where vaccines are being used.

The network released scientific statements to address emerging animal influenza threats. These included a [statement on high pathogenicity avian influenza caused by viruses of the H5N1 subtype](#), and statements on [avian influenza events in wildlife, mammals](#) and [cats](#). Other examples of technical documents developed to support national surveillance and control efforts included:

- [Avian influenza in the Latin America and Caribbean region](#)
- [Southward expansion of HPAI H5 in wildlife in South America](#)
- [Continued expansion of HPAI H5 in wildlife in South America and incursion into the Antarctic region](#)

The OFFLU network regularly contributes to WHO influenza Vaccine Composition Meetings (VCM). The network participated in the [February](#) and [September](#) 2023 WHO VCM and provided a total of 2,619 H5, H7 and H9 avian influenza virus sequences isolated in Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas. In addition, 588 H1 and H3 swine influenza virus sequences were shared. Antigenic data were generated by the haemagglutination inhibition assay using WHO Collaborating Centre and OFFLU ferret-origin reagents. The [reports](#) are available online.

The OFFLU proficiency testing panel for the year 2023 was received by WOA/FAO Reference Centres and was designed to assess the capability of the laboratories to detect and characterise isolates of avian influenza. The round was coordinated by the Australian Centre for Disease Preparedness (ACDP) and conducted under its ISO 17043 accreditation.

The report of the OFFLU Steering and Executive Committee meeting is available [online](#).

The WOA/avian influenza scientific network continued to deliver concrete outputs that contribute to the mitigation of risks to public and animal health posed by zoonotic animal influenza viruses. The WOA/avian influenza scientific network, FAO and WHO are in regular communication to share public health and animal health data so that risk assessments can be continually updated on issues related to the animal–human interface, including, for example, the publication of a [rapid risk assessment of H5N1 clade 2.3.4.4b viruses](#) and a rapid risk assessment of [human infection with H5N1 in Cambodia](#).

- HPAI notifications and situation reports

WOAH continues to monitor notifications of the occurrence of avian influenza through WAHIS and generates [reports](#) that provide an update of the avian influenza situation at both global and regional level. The reports briefly present the key risks driving current events – how the strains are interacting with hosts (both wild birds and poultry, and sometimes humans) and the environment (seasonality, livestock husbandry systems, ecosystems) and how the events may evolve in the months ahead. The production frequency of these situation reports is largely driven by the number and severity of notifications for avian influenza received in WAHIS.

- Advocacy and communication

WOAH has developed several videos with experts to raise awareness on avian influenza and address key questions. These videos are available [here](#) and were disseminated across social media channels throughout the year. Articles were also written on the topic and shared online:

- [Avian influenza vaccination: why it should not be a barrier to safe trade](#)
- [Avian influenza: understanding new dynamics to better combat the disease](#)
- [Avian influenza: why strong public policies are vital - WOA/avian influenza](#)
- [Tackling avian influenza: the role of Veterinary Services](#)

- GF-TADs avian influenza task force

In view of the significant changes observed in the epidemiology of HPAI viruses in recent years, WOA/avian influenza, in collaboration with FAO through the GF-TADs mechanism, established an HPAI task force to initiate the revision of the global strategy for prevention and control of HPAI, which had last been updated in October 2008. The development of the new HPAI strategy involved evidence gathered through regional and sub-regional virtual consultations, online surveys, reports from Regional GF-TADs Standing Groups of Experts, and inputs received from the FAO Global consultation on HPAI and the WOA/avian influenza Animal Health Forum on avian influenza (2023). Overarching

strategies, such as the GF-TADs Global strategy, the WOAAH Seventh Strategic Plan and the FAO livestock transformation policy, were consulted during the formulation of the strategy. To facilitate this process, WOAAH and FAO contracted a team of four consultants to align the strategy with higher-level policies. Regular updates to the GF-TADs Management and Steering Committee meetings led to approvals in the drafting process of the new strategy. The strategy is set to undergo consultations and a commenting process in early 2024. Following finalisation of the strategy, communication and launch options will be agreed and implemented by WOAAH and FAO.

- Regional coordination and capacity-building activities

Americas: following a recommendation by the Standing Group of Experts on HPAI, created in December 2022, a [technical meeting on HPAI vaccination](#) and the [second](#) and third Standing Group meetings were organised in 2023 with the aim of engaging stakeholders from the entire region, including from the wildlife sector, exchanging information on the situation, control options and priorities and sharing inter-regional experiences.

Europe: in 2023, [the Standing Group of Experts on HPAI for Europe](#) was created, including all 53 Members of the region. This joint initiative involving WOAAH, FAO and the European Commission (DG SANTE) aims to enhance cooperation in preventing and controlling HPAI. The Standing Group will regularly convene to review prevention and control strategies, exchange epidemiological information, share best practices and formulate a coordinated strategy based on the One Health approach.

Asia-Pacific: the scientific network on avian influenza and other avian diseases organised a [Regional Workshop for Avian Disease Prevention and Control](#) in People's Republic of China in August 2023 and continued to support Members to strengthen the regional effort to control avian infectious diseases by promoting information sharing on all bacterial and viral avian diseases, not only those described in the WOAAH *Terrestrial Code*.

#### **2.4.2.3 African swine fever**

African swine fever continues to be a priority for WOAAH and its Members. Within WOAAH, an internal coordination group is in place to facilitate sharing of updates and developments between Headquarters and the Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives.

#### **GF-TADs initiative for the global control of ASF**

In 2023, WOAAH continued to implement activities under the GF-TADs initiative for the global control of ASF (Global Initiative), in collaboration with FAO and other technical partners. Launched in July 2020, the [Global Initiative](#) seeks to achieve the global control of ASF. The GF-TADs Working Group on ASF, comprising both WOAAH and FAO representatives, routinely met to coordinate the implementation of the Global Initiative and to support ASF control strategies at the regional level.

Integral to the implementation of the Global Initiative are the activities of the regional Standing Groups of Experts on ASF (SGEs-ASF), aimed at strengthening regional dialogue, cooperation and coordination on ASF prevention and control. In July 2023, the 8th SGE-ASF Meeting for the [Asia and the Pacific](#) Region was held in-person in Qingdao, People's Republic of China and was focused on biosecurity. In August 2023, the 3rd SGE-ASF Meeting for the [Africa](#) Region was held in Abidjan, Cote d'Ivoire, with a focus on strengthening biosecurity along the value chain and enhancing surveillance and diagnostic capabilities for ASF control. In [Europe](#), the 21<sup>st</sup> SGE-ASF meeting was held in Brussels, Belgium, in September 2023, and focused on wild boar carcass detection and disposal.

To facilitate cooperation and dialogue across the SGEs-ASF, the Global Coordination Committee for ASF was launched on the margins of WOA's 90th General Session, bringing together the Chairs of the GF-TADs Regional Steering Committees and SGE-ASF members. Priority areas in common were identified to guide future activities.

- Strengthening laboratory diagnostics for ASF

WOAH Headquarters continues to work closely with its network of seven ASF Reference Laboratories to harmonise, standardise, validate and make available ASF diagnostic assays; to provide expertise and training for WOA and its Members in relation to ASF diagnosis, surveillance and control; and to collect, analyse and disseminate epidemiological information on the global occurrence of ASF and the genetic characterisation of ASF virus. In 2023, three meetings were held to exchange scientific and technical expertise on ASF vaccine development, diagnosis and control measures. In addition, the network has been exploring ways to establish an open access information sharing platform for ASF virus genome sequence data, as well as developing training programmes to assist Members at risk and providing proficiency testing participation for a number of Members. The network will also release a laboratory algorithm manual to address the detection of virulent and variant forms of ASF virus.

In the Americas Region, WOA organised the first interlaboratory comparison trial (ILCT) on ASF and classical swine fever (CSF) diagnostic techniques, in collaboration with the European Union Reference Laboratory for African swine fever (EURL-ASF), the Animal Health Research Centre (INIA-CISA/CSIC) and the WOA Reference Laboratory for CSF at the Animal Health Research Centre, Institute of Agrifood Research and Technology (IRTA-CReSA). The objective of this ILCT was to determine the diagnostic capabilities of the national reference laboratories of countries in the Americas, with the aim of harmonising and strengthening the diagnosis of ASF and CSF in the region. At the end of August 2023, WOA funded bench-top training of selected national laboratory staff on advanced diagnosis and sequencing of ASF virus at the Onderstepoort Veterinary Research Institute in Pretoria, South Africa, a WOA Reference Laboratory for ASF.

- ASF notification and situation reports

WOAH continues to monitor notifications of the occurrence of ASF through WAHIS and generates reports providing an update of the ASF situation at both global and regional level. Situation reports for ASF are published every two weeks and are available [online](#). The reports cover the updates on ASF occurrences in the preceding two weeks and include other significant updates and key recommendations for Members.

- Standards on safe and efficacious ASF vaccines

In September 2023, draft standards on the manufacture of safe and efficacious vaccines for ASF were circulated to Members by the [Biological Standards Commission](#). The standards had been drafted after a series of surveys, in-person exchanges with subject matter experts and five technical workshops, including one with key vaccine regulatory bodies. The WOA Reference Laboratory network was also extensively consulted.

- Technical support for the implementation of regional and national strategies for the prevention and control of ASF

WOAH Regional and Sub-Regional Representations co-organised or participated in several national or regional ASF meetings and workshops and projects in 2023, including the following:

- Global ASF Research Alliance ([GARA](#)) [Gap Analysis](#) workshop in Uganda in February 2023 to discuss gaps in knowledge of ASF and identify projects and outcomes in the control of ASF in Africa, and the subsequent meeting in November 2023 of the GARA Africa Chapter workshop/General Assembly;

- [ASF Workshop in the Philippines for ASEAN](#) in May 2023 to finalise the ASEAN ASF Prevention and Control Strategy, which was endorsed by the ASEAN Sectoral Working Group for Livestock;
- consultancy project for a risk-based ASF Control Strategy, piloted in one country in Southeast Asia;
- [GARA Gap Analysis workshop in the Philippines](#) in December 2023, identifying critical knowledge and research gaps related to ASF that are specific to Asia.
- Caribbean Agriculture Week, with a focus on ASF, in October 2023, with a commitment to prioritise ASF prevention and control and strengthen surveillance for ASF in the Caribbean countries;
- [SGE-ASF expert mission to Bosnia and Herzegovina](#), in response to detection of ASF.

#### **2.4.2.4 Foot and mouth disease**

WOAH continued to support Members on the implementation of Global FMD Control Strategy activities by strengthening coordination with FAO through the joint FMD working group. The regional roadmap meetings, regional advisory groups and various Progressive Control Pathway for Foot and Mouth Disease (PCP-FMD) tools, including WOAHP Reference Laboratories for FMD, were used as the platforms and resources to support Members.

The WOAHP/FAO Reference Laboratory network for FMD continued to actively support all the regional roadmap meetings by providing updates on the global FMD situation and information on vaccine matching and selection, which is even more critical due to the trans-pool movement of FMD serotypes. During its annual meeting, held in Canada in October 2023, the network noted one of the key events as the new FMD outbreaks due to serotype SAT2 in the Middle East and North Africa. Whilst *in vitro* vaccine-matching results were considered to be quite positive, the problem of uncertainty regarding the performance of the vaccine in the field was raised; *in vivo* studies were planned to take place before the end of 2023. The network continues to collaborate on the following: vaccine selection for endemic pools; FMD vaccine testing to identify indicative responses on performance; and studies on correlation between vaccine-induced antibodies and protection. Furthermore, following up on the concerns raised in the past few years, the network contributed to a [publication](#) to promote wider awareness of the Nagoya Protocol, highlighting its impact on the exchange of biological material not only for FMD research activities but also for the development of new, epidemiologically relevant vaccines and other diagnostic tools to control FMD.

- Strengthening laboratory diagnostics for FMD

To support the capacity of veterinary laboratories, particularly in regions where FMD diagnostic laboratories are lacking, WOAHP offers its Members several solutions through the PVS Pathway. The ongoing WOAHP Laboratory Twinning project between The Pirbright Institute, United Kingdom, and the FMD National Reference Laboratory, Embakasi, Kenya, aims at building enhanced diagnostic capacity for FMD in Kenya and the East African region. This will enable more Members in the region to access high-quality FMD diagnostic testing and technical knowledge.

- Regional approach to FMD control

The regional approach to capacity building in the control of FMD follows the seven FMD virus pools but the dynamics of livestock movement and trade patterns increase the risk, spread and emergence of FMD serotypes into new geographical locations, as has been reported in Africa, Asia, Eastern Europe, and the Middle East regarding FMD serotypes O and SAT 2. WOAHP, in collaboration with FAO, conducted regional coordination meetings with the following aims: to support Members in exchanging



information regarding the FMD situation, to promote the effective utilisation of existing tools including *Terrestrial Code* standards and guidelines to, among others, prevent further spread of serotype SAT 2, strengthen and revise national FMD control strategies and strengthen laboratory networks. Coordination meetings were held in March 2023 for the Arabian Gulf including Yemen, in April 2023 in Azerbaijan for [Western Eurasia](#), in May 2023 for [South Asia](#) and in December 2023 for West Africa.

The [Private Sector Consultative Committee \(PSCC\) of the South East Asia and China Foot and Mouth Disease Campaign \(SEACFMD\)](#) met in March 2023 and made recommendations on the strengthening of partnerships between the Veterinary Services and the private sector in line with the WOAHA Guidelines for Public–Private Partnerships to enhance FMD prevention and control, including safer trade, and to reduce the impact of FMD.

In order to prioritise the support to Africa Region Members in PCP-FMD Stages 0, 1 and 2, a workshop was held in South Africa in September 2023 with a focus on strengthening FMD risk assessment principles and to share tools to strengthen national control strategies and accelerate advancement along the PCP-FMD for these priority Members. The low level of national prioritisation of FMD coupled with limited to no financial resource allocation to TAD control activities is critical, particularly in some parts of Africa, hence the low level of advancement, such as in West and Central Africa compared to other regions, such as South East Asia and southern Africa, where exports justify the prioritisation and control of FMD.

The [26th SEACFMD National Coordinators Meeting](#) in August 2023 aligned the ongoing SEACFMD activities based on the findings and recommendations of the SEACFMD campaign evaluation from 1997 to 2020 and explored options to enhance cost-efficient synergies for the control of FMD and other related TADs such as ASF, LSD and PPR. This approach to synergies was implemented during the South Asia meeting, which jointly addressed PPR, FMD and LSD. This approach was well received by Members.

Through these regional coordination meetings, four Members (Nepal, Niger, Nigeria and Zambia) had their national plans reviewed. All the Members participating in the regional coordination meetings have applied the Self-Assessment Tool (PCP-FMD SAT) to assess their level of implementation of FMD measures. The SAT is aligned with the PVS Pathway. According to the Regional Advisory Groups' assessments, about 54% of all the Members participating in the PCP-FMD were at stages 0 and 1 in 2023. WOAHA continued to provide training and guidelines to Members regarding the requirements for official recognition and, in 2023, the Republic of Korea, one zone of Bolivia, one new zone of Colombia and one new zone of Russia were added to the list of countries or zones free from FMD. In 2024, mechanisms will be put in place for Members whose status has been suspended or whose control programmes have been withdrawn to receive more support and guidance from the GF-TADs Working Group on FMD.

- Review of the Global FMD Control Strategy

An external review of the implementation of the Global FMD Control Strategy concluded in 2023 that although progress had been made by the more than 80 Members engaged in the PCP-FMD, the level of progress varied according to the Region. Common gaps and challenges that were identified included insufficient levels of resources and surveillance capacity, poor vaccination coverage, inadequate livestock movement controls and insufficient awareness of the negative socio-economic impacts of FMD and the benefits of control. Resource mobilisation is very weak and hinders progress, particularly in the poorest Members. WOAHA's strategy, in collaboration with resource partners, is to prioritise the recommendations based on feasibility and expected impact of the actions to meet the objectives of the Global FMD Control Strategy by 2027.



- Communication and awareness

WOAH recognises the importance of sensitising Members on the risk of spread of FMD, particularly during festivities and times of peak travel due to religious ceremonies, and in 2023 sent out awareness messages to members of the public regarding the risk of spread of FMD. Also, an awareness-raising article was published on [safeguarding livestock during seasonal movements](#), bearing in mind that such movements are increasing due to the impact of climate change and the search for pastures. Other learning, communication and awareness resources targeting veterinarians and veterinary paraprofessionals, livestock owners and traders have been published on the [WOAH website](#).

#### **2.4.2.5 Peste des petits ruminants**

In 2023, WOA and FAO continued their collaboration under the GF-TADs umbrella for the implementation of the PPR Global Control and Eradication Strategy ([PPR GCES](#)), supporting all partners involved in the different regions, and turning the [Blueprint](#) developed in 2022 into updated regional approaches.

The PPR Global Research and Expertise Network (PPR GREN) meeting held on 27-30 November 2023 emphasised the need for research innovations to contribute to the eradication phase of the PPR Global Eradication Programme (PPR GEP).

- Support for the regional strategy

Jointly with FAO, WOA conducted regional coordination meetings to support the revision or the development of PPR eradication strategies in line with the PPR Blueprint in North Africa, the Mano River Basin, East Africa, [South Asia](#) and [West Eurasia](#). WOA also organised the technical item on PPR presented at the [25th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa](#), which led to specific [recommendations](#). These will be taken into account during the development of a joint programme for sub-Saharan African countries with AU-IBAR, the African Union Panafrican Veterinary Vaccine Centre (AU-PANVAC) and FAO starting in 2024. Regional coordination meetings were also organised by WOA for [East Asia](#) countries and South East Asia, leading to the development of the [ASEAN PPR Preparedness Strategy](#).

- Strengthening laboratory diagnostics for PPR

The WOA Reference Laboratory network for PPR managed by the three WOA Reference Laboratories (CIRAD, the French agricultural research and co-operation organisation; The Pirbright Institute [United Kingdom]; and the China Animal Health and Epidemiology Center [People's Republic of China]) and composed of 21 laboratories, continued its support activities, which included organisation of proficiency testing with over 40 participants, and [webinars](#) (e.g. a webinar on Harmonisation of PPR diagnostic practices through proficiency tests and the third WOA PPR Reference Laboratories network workshop) as well as keeping Members updated through the annual [newsletter](#).

A laboratory twinning project was completed; three countries, Morocco, Senegal and Tanzania, benefited from this programme.

- Other capacity-building activities

Regional/epizone meetings provided opportunities to support Members with their PPR control activities and to assess and document Members' progression along the four-stage process towards PPR eradication. By the end of 2023, a total of 13 PVS missions with a PPR-specific component had been conducted; in 2023, this activity was conducted in Zambia. The PVS reports link to the PPR Monitoring and Assessment Tool (PMAT) as it provides objective field verification of PMAT staging with targeted recommendations that feed into the National Strategic Plans (NSPs). WOA will continue to support Members with elaborating their PPR control and eradication plans and provide training on WOA procedures for official recognition of PPR free status and for the endorsement of official PPR control programmes.

Following the finalisation of the revised PMAT (PMAT2), FAO and WOAHA in 2023 initiated the development of e-module training to assist Members in the efficient use of the tool, which will enable them to monitor and evaluate the status of their PPR control and eradication activities and their progress along the stages of the PPR GCES. In addition, the development of a digital version of the PMAT was initiated to help users at country level to run the assessment as a collective exercise and facilitate PMAT submission and assessment by the Regional Advisory Groups (RAGs); for users at the Global and Regional GF-TADs Secretariat, the digital PMAT will provide an overview of common gaps and priorities for Members to address.

The Regional Sahel Pastoralism Support Project (PRAPS) continued to provide technical support to its beneficiary Members in the Sahel. The PRAPS project is supporting the implementation of PPR national strategic plans in the beneficiary Members. The project also assisted a few other countries in West Africa (Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire) in the development of their PPR eradication programmes. As a result, PRAPS countries and Benin, Togo and Côte d'Ivoire are progressing well with their PPR control programme.

WOAHA encourages Members that have never reported PPR to implement the required surveillance and other necessary activities to ensure compliance with the relevant WOAHA standards with regard to official PPR free status and subsequently undertake the procedures for submission of an application to WOAHA for the official recognition of their PPR free status. FAO and AU-IBAR have expressed their willingness to assist Members in this regard.

OHRT<sup>4</sup> BMZ<sup>5</sup> TADs and PC-TADs<sup>6</sup> projects covering Cameroon, Namibia, Kenya and Ethiopia are ongoing and, in the case of Kenya, they are helping to strengthen the veterinary workforce and implement the PPR vaccination campaign.

- Support for vaccine access

A vaccine producers meeting, held on 27-31 March 2023, discussed the PPR thermostable vaccine and the total demand for PPR vaccine in the forthcoming eradication phase.

In addition, the WOAHA [PPR vaccine bank](#) has continued to give Members the opportunity to access, at a negotiated price, quality vaccines in accordance with an international procurement procedure. In 2023, 25 million doses of PPR vaccine were delivered through the WOAHA PPR vaccine bank.

#### **2.4.2.6 Lumpy skin disease**

In 2023, Section C of *Terrestrial Manual* Chapter 3.4.12. Lumpy skin disease (LSD) was revised following an extensive consultation with experts on issues relating to vaccine quality, to ensure that the standards reflect the latest science and provide Members with up-to-date requirements for LSD vaccines.

In the Europe region, the [12th Meeting of the Standing Group of Experts on LSD](#) met virtually in March 2023 to discuss pertinent issues around surveillance, vaccine quality control and vaccination strategy and the sharing of information on LSD. In December 2023, in collaboration with Sciensano, a WOAHA Reference Laboratory for LSD, an [online seminar](#) targeting Central Asia countries was organised to discuss laboratory diagnostics and vaccines for LSD.

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<sup>4</sup> OHRT: One Health approach towards Rabies and Transboundary Diseases control

<sup>5</sup> BMZ: German Ministry of Economic Cooperation and Development

<sup>6</sup> PC-TAD: Prevention and Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases for the benefit of smallholder farmers

In July 2023, a sub-regional [workshop](#) for PPR and LSD in East Asia was organised in Qingdao, People's Republic of China, which covered the epidemiological situation for LSD and prevention and response measures, including diagnostic capacity and vaccination issues. Within the South-East Asia sub-region, the [4th LSD Coordination Meeting](#) for South-East Asia was held back-to-back with the meeting of the Core Group and Advisory Group in November 2023 for the development of an ASEAN LSD Prevention and Control Strategy.

#### **2.4.2.7 Rinderpest post-eradication**

The number of WOAAH Members holding rinderpest virus-containing materials (RVCM) as of December 2023 remained the same as that reported in 2022. Eleven Members still hold RVCM, six of which have FAO-WOAAH-designated Rinderpest Holding Facilities; the other five Members have not yet taken the decision to destroy or sequester their RVCM.

FAO and WOAAH reviewed and updated the terms of reference and composition of the FAO-WOAAH Joint Advisory Committee for Rinderpest under the oversight of the GF-TADS Management Committee.

WOAH convened an 'eradicated disease forum' to share experience on policies to safeguard the eradicated status of pathogens. This included sharing experiences from smallpox, rinderpest and polio campaigns. The forum assessed and compared the governance mechanisms for pathogens that have been eradicated or are targeted for eradication, especially in relation to the inspection and oversight of pathogen sequestration facilities. Recommendations were issued with a view to strengthening governance and oversight based on experience to date.

#### **2.4.2.8 Registration of diagnostic kits**

In accordance with Resolution No. XXIX adopted at the 71st General Session in 2003, WOAAH maintains its [register of certified diagnostic kits](#), which, in December 2023, comprised a total of 16 different diagnostic kits, covering 12 of the 117 terrestrial and aquatic WOAAH-listed diseases. The number of registered kits still represents only a tiny proportion of the more than 1,700 kits commercially available worldwide, according to the [list maintained by Diagnostics for Animals](#), indicating very low traction of WOAAH's register.

During 2023, six diagnostic kits, five for terrestrial animals and one for aquatic animals, were endorsed by the Assembly through [resolutions Nos 30 and 31](#). In parallel, the Biological Standards Commission and the Aquatic Animal Health Commission were informed during their [meetings in February 2023](#) on the work WOAAH is undertaking to review the registration process, with a view to increasing the value WOAAH provides to its Members in the field of diagnostics kits. This work encompasses the exploration, during the next 24 months, of the following three areas:

- a. Mechanisms that could be implemented for facilitating regulatory harmonisation of diagnostic kits.
- b. The value of setting minimum criteria needed for reliable registration of diagnostic kits, facilitating accessibility to Members regardless of their regulatory capacity.
- c. Streamlining the kit recognition procedure(s) and aligning WOAAH Collaborating Centres and Reference Laboratories with activities relating to the registration of diagnostic kit.

Preliminary meetings with key stakeholders, including HealthforAnimals and Diagnostics for Animals, took place in 2023 to explore facilitation of regulatory harmonisation, [leveraging previous discussions on this topic](#) in planned renewed collaboration with the International Alliance for Biological Standardization (IABS).

Exploration of the other two leads has not been initiated, due to the lack of sufficient resources to properly execute them. In November 2022, WOAHA stopped the review and validation of new applications, maintaining a minimum activity to process dossiers already under evaluation and renewals of registered kits, as well as the evaluation of exceptional applications linked to an emergency animal health situation.

### 2.4.3 Animal welfare

The WOAHA Global Animal Welfare Strategy continues to provide guidance for WOAHA's activities in the field of animal welfare. The work programme for 2023–2024 included nine activities under the four strategic pillars of the Strategy; the highlights are described below.

- Development of animal welfare chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*

The Code Commission continued its work on animal welfare chapters of the *Terrestrial Code*, including:

- revision of Chapter 7.1. Introduction to the recommendation for animal welfare to include the 'Five domains concept'.
- a comprehensive revision of Chapters 7.2. and 7.3., dealing with the transport of animals by sea and land, respectively;
- a comprehensive revision of Chapter 7.5. Slaughter of animals that will be proposed for adoption in 2024;
- a comprehensive revision of Chapter 7.6. Killing of animals for disease control purposes.

For more details, refer to the relevant [reports](#) of the *Code Commission*.

- Capacity building and education

A project for the implementation of *Terrestrial Code* Chapters 7.13. Animal welfare and pig production systems and 7.6. Killing of animals for disease control purposes was carried out in South-East Asia by the International Coalition for Animal Welfare and the WOAHA Collaborating Centre for Animal Welfare Science and Bioethical Analysis, and included training of trainers, the development of e-learning modules and a PPP tool.

Work continued on the establishment of a new Animal Welfare Network for the four WOAHA Collaborating Centres on Animal Welfare with the objective of providing greater support to WOAHA Members from a globally coordinated perspective.

WOAHA national Focal Points for Animal Welfare 'Information Flash Meetings' were held in November 2023 to provide Focal Points with relevant information about standard-setting work on animal welfare undertaken during the September 2023 meeting of the Code Commission, the aim being to encourage the active engagement of Focal Points in the standard-setting process.

As part of the Observatory's Thematic study on animal welfare during transport by land and sea, a survey was developed and launched to assess the level of Members' implementation of WOAHA standards relevant to animal welfare during transport by land and sea (see also [Section 2.2.4](#) Observatory).

- Advocacy and communication

The Fifth [WOAHA Animal Welfare Global Forum](#) 'Developing national animal welfare legislation; different paths for the same destination' was held in-person in November 2023 and brought together representatives from the global animal welfare community to discuss the topic of animal welfare legislation. Forty-five invited participants, including WOAHA Members, national Focal Points for Animal Welfare, Collaborating Centres for Animal Welfare and international organisations having cooperation agreements with WOAHA attended the event.

WOAH has continued its close collaboration with UNEP to support the implementation of the 5th United Nations Environment Assembly Resolution No. 1: 'Animal Welfare—environment—sustainable development nexus', together with the other Quadripartite partners.

- Implementation of animal welfare standards and policies

As part of the Third Action Plan of the WOAHP Platform on Animal Welfare for Europe, two multi-regional 'whole journey scenario' workshops focused on transport routes were organised, and included participants from Europe, the Middle East and North Africa, with the objective to support Members in improving animal welfare and ensuring compliance with Chapters 7.2. and 7.3. of the *Terrestrial Code*.

The members of the RAWs for the Asia and Pacific Region launched a process of review that included its contents, the action plan and the composition of the RAWs Advisory Group.

Detailed information about WOAHP animal welfare activities is available on the [WOAHP website](#).

#### **2.4.4 Aquatic animal health**

The WOAHP Aquatic Animal Health Strategy (AAHS) is being implemented over four years (2021-2025) and aims to improve aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide. The Strategy is guiding actions to strengthen four areas: standards, capacity building, resilience and leadership.

During 2023, the AAHS continued to address the highest priority needs in aquatic animal health and focused resources on 17 of the 23 activities identified in the strategy. The highlights are presented below.

- Identifying barriers to strengthen Members' Aquatic Animal Health Services

In 2023, the results of a survey of national Focal Points for Aquatic Animals conducted in 2022 were analysed and barriers to the implementation of WOAHP standards and transparency in disease reporting were identified. The lack of financial and human resources as well as gaps in national regulations were considered the most significant barriers by WOAHP Members. Key priorities identified in the survey were capacity building and education. A report on the results, including recommendations for WOAHP and its Members, will be published in 2024 and will be used to inform ongoing activities to engage and support the WOAHP Community more effectively.

- Training workshops for National Focal Points for Aquatic Animals

In 2023, in-person training workshops for national Focal Points for Aquatic Animals were held in the Asia and the Pacific, Africa and Europe Regions. These workshops provided a forum to engage with Members on the AAHS, identify regional needs and priorities, and promote implementation of WOAHP standards.

Focal Points in all three regions identified support for the implementation of WOAHP standards and support for early disease response at the national level as their highest priority needs. AAHS activities are being developed to address these needs.

- Regional aquatic animal health networks

The establishment of WOAHP regional networks for aquatic animal health have proven to be an effective mechanism to operationalise the AAHS to meet regional needs and strengthen collaboration.

In 2023, three new regional networks were launched in Africa. This builds on the existing networks in Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East.

Aquatic animal health networks aim to support the development of Members' aquaculture sectors, through the prevention, early detection and control of aquatic animal diseases. They achieve this by strengthening communication, building synergies and improving coordination in the implementation of standards at a regional level.

- Engaging WOA's scientific networks

In 2023, WOA established a network of Collaborating Centres for aquatic animal health, aimed at facilitating collaboration among these Centres. This network, together with a network of Reference Laboratories (to be established in 2024), will strengthen support for WOA Members for aquatic animal disease diagnosis and control.

- Increasing the use of the WOA PVS Pathway

The WOA Aquatic PVS Pathway supports Members with implementing WOA standards and continually improving their Aquatic Animal Health Services. Results from the consultation to develop the AAHS indicated that Members see value in the PVS Pathway.

Although the uptake of the Aquatic PVS Pathway by Members has been low in comparison to the terrestrial sector, in 2023 an initial PVS Evaluation of Aquatic Animal Health Services was conducted in Uzbekistan and a PVS Follow-up Evaluation took place in Mozambique. These evaluations are designed to identify strengths and weaknesses and provide recommendations for improvements (see also [Section 2.3.1](#) PVS Pathway).

- Communication

An issue of [WOA Panorama](#) dedicated to implementation of the AAHS was published in 2023.

#### **2.4.5 Emergency management and preparedness**

In 2023, WOA, FAO and the International Criminal Police Organization (INTERPOL) successfully concluded the Building Resilience Against Argo-Crime and Agro-Terrorism Project. This groundbreaking global initiative, supported by Global Affairs Canada's Weapons Threat Reduction Program, aimed to build global capacity sustainably to respond to animal disease emergencies resulting from the intentional release of an animal pathogen. This was achieved by fostering cooperation between Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services at national, regional and international level.

In February 2023, as part of the Project, WOA, FAO and INTERPOL delivered an international agro-terrorism simulation exercise called [Exercise Phoenix](#) with the technical support of the European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (eFunds) and WOA's Collaborating Centre on Biological Threat Reduction (Institute for Infectious Animal Diseases, Texas, United States of America). Exercise Phoenix encompassed three regional discussion exercises that were held almost simultaneously in the Middle East, North Africa and South East Asia. The Exercise included 108 players from 12 countries from both Law Enforcement and Veterinary Services. Following the regional exercises, a discussion exercise for international organisations was held at FAO Headquarters. The exercise generated concrete recommendations for enhancing prevention of, preparedness for and response to agro-terrorism events, to be implemented by WOA, INTERPOL and FAO in their future activities.

In April 2023, to conclude the Project, WOA hosted the [Global Conference on Emergency Management](#), the first of its kind dedicated to discussing emergencies impacting or involving animals. In addition to the support of Global Affairs Canada, the Conference was also financially supported by the Défense Threat Reduction Agency (DTRA) of the United States Department of Défense, the United Kingdom Ministry of Defence and the European Union. This multi-sectoral Conference brought together over 300 participants and saw official representation from 61 WOA Members. The Conference raised awareness of the diverse spectrum of hazards and threats facing the animal health sector and the global community and highlighted good practices to apply in emergency management. Conference participants collectively formulated strategic calls for action, which WOA is using to guide its future programming in emergency management.



Building on its previous emergency management work, WOAAH began a new project to fortify institutional resilience against biological threats, with the financial support of Global Affairs Canada's Weapons Threat Reduction Program. This project aims to build the emergency management capacity of both WOAAH and its Members. It includes building an incident management system for WOAAH to support its own response to international sanitary crises. To support its Members, beginning with those in Africa, WOAAH has taken a country-driven approach to collaboratively build work plans with nine countries that responded positively to a call for expressions of interest for inclusion in the project. [Activities](#) to be implemented with the support of WOAAH's experts and partners will address the areas of disease intelligence, emergency management, sustainable laboratories and veterinary legislation. National activities for training in biosafety and biosecurity were completed in five countries in 2023, including a regional training course on biological waste management. A total of 132 participants were trained across the animal, public, and environmental health sectors, including two representatives from law enforcement.

To further its engagement with security partners, WOAAH is actively working with INTERPOL to operationalise the cooperation agreement they signed in 2022. In November 2023, WOAAH and INTERPOL delivered a workshop to identify good interview techniques in epidemiological, compliance and criminal investigations. Guidelines both for national Veterinary Services and for Law Enforcement agencies are due to be published in 2024.

WOAH has continued to be a voice for animal health in the global dialogue on biological threat reduction, such as through participation in meetings of the Global Partnership Against the Spread of Weapons and Materials of Mass Destruction (the [Global Partnership](#)) and the working group on strengthening the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention.

## **2.5. International collaboration**

### **2.5.1 Scientific networks**

#### **2.5.1.1 Science System**

WOAH's science system has been functioning and evolving ever since WOAAH's inception as the OIE in 1924. The technical governance of different aspects of the system is documented in WOAAH's Basic Texts. These texts broadly define WOAAH's structure and procedures, including how Specialist Commissions, Working Groups, *ad hoc* Groups and various experts function to help the Organisation fulfil its mandates. However, to enhance confidence in WOAAH's processes related to its core mandates, increase the associated understanding of Members and other, external stakeholders, and for business continuity within WOAAH, it is important for the science system to be documented and to ensure its processes. The efforts now being undertaken in this respect will serve as a basis for WOAAH to review the technical governance of WOAAH's Basic Texts and to ensure that the science system processes and procedures are fit-for-purpose, aligned with best practices and optimised to support WOAAH's missions.

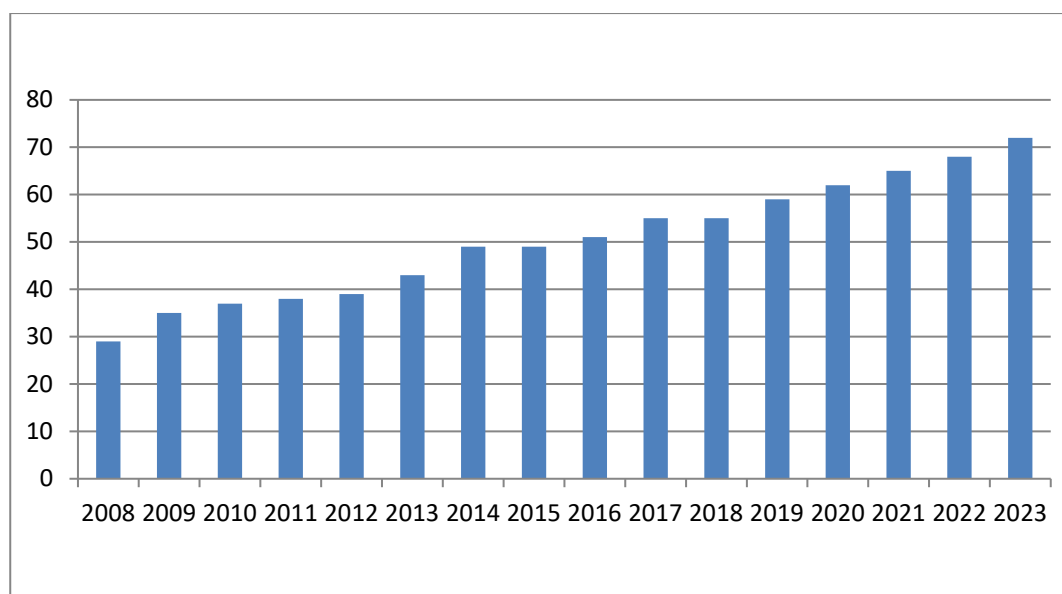
The specific objectives of the project are: to describe the structure and functioning of WOAAH's science system; to consider its performance against WOAAH's strategic priorities; and to identify opportunities for enhancement or improved alignment with the Seventh Strategic Plan. Through an examination of the science systems of several similar organisations, interviews with WOAAH stakeholders (internal and external) and a workshop corroborating the description of the science system and its processes, a final report capturing the WOAAH science system has been developed, and this serves as a reference document for an overarching initiative for the external review of the WOAAH Basic Texts undertaken by the Directorate General.

### 2.5.1.2 Collaborating Centres

In 2023, four new Collaborating Centres were designated by the Assembly, bringing the total number of WOAAH Collaborating Centres to 72 (Figure 15).

The following new WOAAH Collaborating Centres were approved:

- Wildlife Health Risk Management, Wildlife Health Australia (WHA), Cammeragal/Dharawal Country, Mosman, New South Wales, Australia;
- Quality Control of Veterinary Vaccines in the Middle East, The Central Laboratory for Evaluation of Veterinary Biologics (CLEVB), Abbassia, Cairo, Egypt;
- Day-One Veterinary Competencies in the Middle East, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine, Cairo University, Oula, Giza District, Giza Governorate, Egypt;
- Economics of Animal Health in the Americas Region, Department of Agricultural Economics, Kansas State University, United States of America; Department of Economics, Business and Sociology (ESALQ/USP), University of São Paulo, and Faculty of Agronomy and Veterinary Medicine, University of Brasília, Brazil; Department of Business, Economics and Rural Development, Faculty of Veterinary Medicine and Husbandry, Universidad Nacional Autónoma De México; School of Economic Sciences, Paul G. Allen School for Global Health, Washington State University, United States of America.



**Figure 15.** Number of Collaborating Centres

The [list of WOAAH Collaborating Centres](#) is available online.

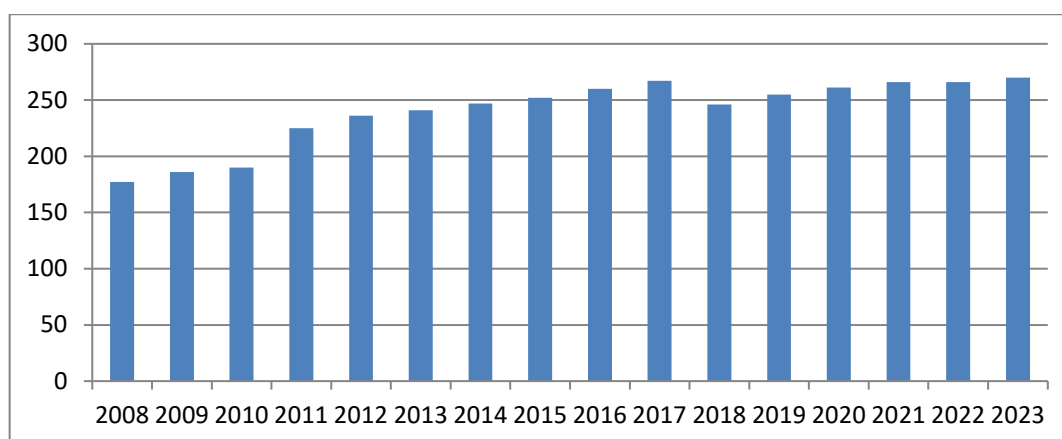
### 2.5.1.3 Reference Laboratories

In 2023, four new applications for WOAAH Reference Laboratory status were approved. This brought the total number of WOAAH Reference Laboratories to 270 (Figure 16).

The following new WOAAH Reference Laboratories were approved:

- Lumpy skin disease, Exotic and vector-borne diseases (EXOVEC), Department of infectious diseases in animals, Sciensano, Uccle, Belgium;

- American foulbrood (infection of honey bees with *Paenibacillus* larvae), Animal Health Laboratory, Diagnostic and Surveillance Services, Biosecurity New Zealand, Ministry for Primary Industries, Upper Hutt, New Zealand;
- Varroosis of honey bees, Animal Health Laboratory, Diagnostic and Surveillance Services, Biosecurity New Zealand, Ministry for Primary Industries, Upper Hutt, New Zealand;
- Mammalian tuberculosis, Centro de Vigilancia Sanitaria Veterinaria (VISAVET), Universidad Complutense de Madrid, Madrid, Spain.



**Figure 16.** *Number of Reference Laboratories*

Note: In 2011, WOAHA Headquarters adopted a new way of counting Reference Laboratories. Previously, laboratories designated for a number of related diseases were counted as one laboratory; since 2011, each laboratory has been designated individually for a single disease and this partly accounts for the apparent large increase between 2010 and 2011.

The [list of WOAHA Reference Laboratories](#) is available online.

In 2023, an improved online system for filling in and submitting the annual reports of the activities of the network of WOAHA Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres was launched. The system will be further developed with the addition of new features in 2024.

#### **2.5.1.4 STAR-IDAZ**

The Strategic Alliances for the Coordination of Research on the Major Infectious Diseases of Animals and Zoonoses, International Research Consortium (STAR-IDAZ IRC), continues to facilitate global collaboration and innovation. WOAHA fully supports the Consortium, not only by participating actively as a member of the Executive Committee, but also by co-hosting its secretariat, SIRCAH2. In 2023, STAR-IDAZ IRC facilitated the networking of more than 50 countries around the globe, supporting the activities of regional networks and working groups and the sharing of expertise and resources on joint priorities, thus accelerating the delivery of disease control tools and strategies for improving animal health worldwide.

A crucial role played by STAR-IDAZ IRC is the development of research roadmaps and identifying research gaps related to major infectious animal diseases. Its various working groups, composed of international experts, identify areas where research efforts are most needed. This invaluable information is then shared with policy-makers and funders to direct resources.

In 2023, gap analysis workshops, platforms for sharing information, networking and discussing research gaps, were organised on bovine tuberculosis, influenza, coronaviruses, contagious bovine pleuropneumonia, One Health, vector-borne diseases and vaccinology. Research roadmaps for disease control strategies, diagnostic tests and candidate vaccines for influenza were recently developed, while, in the Americas, regional perspectives on research roadmaps on alternatives to antimicrobials were discussed in a joint workshop with the Tripartite-supported EU project 'Working Together to Fight Antimicrobial Resistance'. Research reviews on animal influenza, African swine fever virus and the recent veterinary mycoplasmas also provided in-depth analyses of current research and scientific knowledge.

The State-of-the-Art Report 2023 provides an overview of opportunities to accelerate research, foster collaboration in the sector and showcase the latest discoveries concerning priority animal health diseases and cross-cutting issues. Research funders and programme owners worldwide wishing to play a role in advancing disease control tools and strategies are invited to [join forces](#) with STAR-IDAZ IRC.

## 2.5.2 Other networks

### ▪ REMESA

In its capacity as co-secretariat of the Mediterranean Animal Health Network (REMESA), WOA's Sub-Regional Representation for North Africa has facilitated the establishment of the operational Scientific and Technical Office of REMESA (STOR), based at Istituto Zooprofilattico Sperimentale della Sicilia, in Palermo, Italy.

STOR is responsible for supporting the development and implementation of technical projects and activities in the beneficiary members of REMESA. In 2023, STOR organised five webinars on animal health and a training course on rabies (theoretical and applied in the laboratory). In addition, STOR is working on the development of two large-scale projects on vector-borne diseases and animal movements in REMESA countries.

The STOR work plan for 2024 was developed and then presented and approved during the 27th Joint Permanent Committee (JPC) Meeting of REMESA in December 2023.

Among the topic discussed at the 26th and 27th JPC Meetings of REMESA were vaccination against HPAI, including follow up of the resolution adopted by the Assembly of Delegates of WOA on strategic challenges in the global control of HPAI, vector-borne diseases, GF-TADs and the One Health approach.

WOAH will continue to monitor implementation of the REMESA (STOR) work plan in collaboration with the REMESA co-secretariat.

### ▪ AQMENET

WOAH's Aquatic Middle East Network (AQMENET) was officially launched in Saudi Arabia in November 2022. AQMENET is an important mechanism, aligned with WOA's AAHS, which will support the Region in uplifting the regional aquaculture industry by providing state-of-the-art knowledge on aquatic animal disease prevention, early detection and control, diagnostics, surveillance and AMR/AMU.

In February 2023, the Network set its strategic direction with the first meeting of the Steering Committee. In June 2023, a two-day workshop was held to finalise the work plan for 2023-2025. Following this workshop, the 2023-2025 work plan was validated at a meeting of the Technical Committee and then at a meeting of the Steering Committee. Activities will focus on biosecurity, laboratory performance, AMR and emergency preparedness.

Limited financing for the AQMENET work plan and activities for 2024 has been secured.

## ▪ **CAMENET**

In 2023, four meetings of the Camel Middle East Network (CAMENET) Steering and Technical committee were conducted, with the development of the CAMENET action plan for 2024-2025. In its capacity as the hosting institute and Secretariat of the network, the WOAAH Collaborating Centre for Camel Diseases – the Abu Dhabi Agriculture and Food Safety Authority (ADAFSA) laboratory – played a pivotal role in organising the meetings and bringing together the members in the region and camel health and welfare experts.

CAMENET's action plan for 2024-2025 will focus on research, training and qualification to achieve the desired goals of controlling camel diseases in the Middle East region and neighbouring countries and reducing their impact on human and animal health and safety. The proposed plan of activities covers priority diseases for camels, including camel pox, brucellosis, trypanosomiasis, dermatophytosis and Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV), and laboratory testing standards development and validation, scientific development and progress in camel health-related and welfare-related issues such as neonatal camel mortality and calf diarrhoea, camel reproduction management and genetic markers for identification of camel traits, as well as One Health and economic and societal issues related to camelids.

Under CAMENET, work has been initiated to facilitate safe movement of a subpopulation of high health camels for competition purposes, in view of the increasing trade in camels involving the Middle East Region. WOAAH is also in discussion with the International Camel Organization (ICO) regarding activities for the International Year of Camelids 2024 to highlight WOAAH activities in camels.

CAMENET Technical Committee members support the WOAAH standard-setting process by providing technical opinions, such as on the role of camels in the international spread of surra.

### **2.5.3 Technical Partnerships**

#### ▪ **European Commission for the Control of Foot-and-Mouth Disease (EuFMD)**

The active partnership with EuFMD is essential to support Members to build capacity in FMD control. Through the EuFMD Executive Committee meetings, WOAAH continued to play a key role in contributing strategically to the Commission's work plan. EuFMD's e-learning tools have provided valuable support to the capacity-building activities of the GF-TADs programme, especially in the Africa, Europe and Middle East Regions, for the continuous training of Members' Veterinary Services in FMD surveillance and diagnostics, an area that has been identified as needing sustained capacity building due to the turnover of human resources in the Veterinary Services. WOAAH has provided training in risk assessment for PCP-FMD Support Officers (PSO) based in Africa to ensure active and sustained support in the Region. In addition, WOAAH intends to work closely with EuFMD to strengthen Members' capacity in terms of FMD standards and safe trade, to increase their knowledge of the benefits of FMD control and to prioritise its control.

#### ▪ **Codex Alimentarius Commission**

WOAH and the Codex Alimentarius Commission regularly participate in each other's standard-setting activities, as relevant, to ensure an integrated approach to standard setting for the entire food chain. WOAAH monitors the work of the Codex Committee on Food Hygiene, the Codex Committee on Food Import and Export Inspection and Certification Systems and the Codex Committee of Food Labelling and, in 2023, contributed to the 26th Session of the Codex Committee on Residues of Veterinary Drugs in Foods (CCRVDF) by providing a written report on WOAAH activities, including Harmonisation of Technical Requirements for Registration of Veterinary Medicinal Products (VICH).

- **International Air Transport Association**

WOAH has been actively engaged with the International Air Transport Association (IATA) for the past 17 years, having been a member of the IATA Live Animals and Perishables Board (LAPB) since 2006 and having signed a Collaboration Agreement with IATA in 2008.

An important aspect of WOAAH's participation in the LAPB is to ensure harmonisation between WOAAH standards on animal welfare and transport and the IATA Live Animal Regulations. WOAAH is actively engaged with IATA to explore ways to collaborate on the revision of *Terrestrial Code* Chapter 7.4. Transport of animals by air, given IATA's role in the transport of animals by air.

- **International Horse Sports Confederation (IHSC)**

WOAH is engaged in a public-private partnership through an agreement with the International Horse Sports Confederation (IHSC) to support the safe international movement of sports horses for competitions. Several activities are carried out and coordinated under this partnership to support the update of relevant standards and to increase communication and awareness. In 2023, four WOAAH-IHSC technical committee meetings were conducted to follow up on the progress made on projects related to equine diseases (African horse sickness [AHS] vaccines and glanders tests, facilitation of safe international movement of high health, high performance [HHP] horses, etc.).

WOAH facilitated meetings with IHSC on the implementation of the HHP framework and equine disease-free zone (EDFZ) approach for the 19th Asian Games in Hangzhou, People's Republic of China, in September 2023.

IHSC experts have also been contributing to the revision of *Terrestrial Code* chapters on equine diseases. The concept of temporary importation of horses was incorporated into three chapters of the *Terrestrial Code* adopted in May 2023, namely the chapters on contagious equine metritis, equine influenza and equine piroplasmiasis. Furthermore, in 2023, WOAAH-IHSC activities were presented to the relevant Specialist Commissions with a view to seeking synergies for further collaboration.

Collaboration between the IHSC and various WOAAH Regions also continued, including the ongoing project in the Americas to develop a common protocol to facilitate intra-regional movement of competition horses, the compilation of a draft veterinary certificate in line with WOAAH standards and the HHP framework. These certificates are due to be tested through a desktop simulation exercise. Under a consultancy project managed by the WOAAH Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, with the aim of promoting capacity building and emergency preparedness for equine diseases, five webinars were conducted in 2023 with the participation of IHSC experts. Additionally, a survey of the central veterinary laboratories of Members in Asia was conducted to identify their capacity to diagnose equine diseases. IHSC also contributed to the capacity building of laboratories in Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines by financially supporting the shipment of kits for the interlaboratory proficiency testing scheme for AHS, organised by the WOAAH Reference Laboratory for AHS in Spain.

- **World Customs Organization**

During the year, WOAAH monitored relevant meetings of the World Customs Organization (WCO) to ensure cross-border collaboration between the WCO and sanitary and phytosanitary standard-setting agencies at international and national levels. WOAAH also monitored the meeting of the WCO Counterfeiting and Piracy Group, with a view to strengthening collaboration on the reporting of substandard and falsified veterinary medicinal products as part of WOAAH's pilot project on this theme.



- **WTO Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures**

In its capacity as an international organisation having observer status for meetings of the World Trade Organization (WTO) Committee on Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Committee), WOAHA participated in the 85th, 86th and 87th regular meetings of the SPS Committee in 2023, as well as in an SPS Transparency Champions Course in September 2023. WOAHA also participated in several of the thematic groups convened following recommendations of the SPS Declaration from WTO's 12th Ministerial Conference.

In its capacity as a founding partner of the Standards and Trade Development Facility (STDF), WOAHA participated in numerous STDF Working Group activities during 2023. The WOAHA representative was elected as Chair of the Working Group for 2023 and subsequently chaired the two meetings of the Group and also participated in several other events as Chair of the Working Group. WOAHA also participated in several of the STDF Practitioner Groups throughout 2023.

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## 3. OVERVIEW OF ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES

### 3.1. Institutional Governance

#### 3.1.1 Activities of the statutory bodies

##### 3.1.1.1 *World Assembly of Delegates*

The 90th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of WOAAH was held face-to-face in Paris, France, from 21 to 25 May 2023. The decision to hold the General Session face-to-face after a few years of virtual meetings was taken by the WOAAH Council in consultation with the Director General in light of the global favourable context regarding the COVID-19 pandemic.

Key figures and outcomes, including the [Final Report](#), are available on the WOAAH website.

Building on the positive experience gained with the virtual General Sessions held since 2021, the time allocated to each plenary session was optimised by sharing as much information as possible with WOAAH Members ahead of the General Session. A series of pre-General Session Information Webinars was held during the week beginning 17 April 2023 to inform WOAAH Members about the new and revised texts that would be proposed for adoption.

As had been the case in the previous two years, WOAAH Delegates were invited to adopt some administrative and technical resolutions in advance of the General Session, during the period from 16 to 23 May. A remote voting system was deployed to allow Delegates to securely cast their votes electronically, and the results were divulged during the relevant plenary sessions.

From 21 to 25 May, Delegates of 141 Members participated in the General Session. Several Guests of Honour also participated in the Opening Session through pre-recorded video statements or live speech. The Opening Session was also enriched by a Panel Discussion comprising high-level representatives from Members and International Organisations.

To favour enhanced discussions among Delegates, subject-matter experts and relevant stakeholders, a new approach was introduced for the first time in a WOAAH General Session. An Animal Health Forum entitled 'Policy to Action: The case of avian influenza – Reflections for change' was designed to allow an open discussion on how best to address current challenges in the global control of HPAI. The challenges addressed during the Forum included issues related to surveillance and monitoring for early detection and prevention, disease control strategies for prevention and control, trade aspects and global co-ordination. The Forum, which took place through four interactive sessions held on Monday 22 May and the morning of Tuesday 23 May, started with the presentation of the Technical Item by Dr David Swayne (United States of America).

In addition to the reports of the Specialist Commissions and the adoption or revision of 52 international standards, the presentation of the Technical Item and the discussions held during the Forum led to the adoption of a resolution that will guide the work of WOAAH on the 'Strategic challenges in the global control of HPAI'.

Moreover, the General Session included other technical and administrative sessions, the highlights of which were as follows:

- applications for the official recognition of four new animal health statuses, the endorsement of one new official disease control programme and the designation of eight new Reference Centres were adopted by the Assembly;

- the 2024 WOAHA Regular Budget, including a 15% increase in statutory contributions, was adopted by the Assembly;
- the Assembly approved the signing of a cooperation agreement with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI);
- partial elections to fill vacancies on the Council, including the Vice-President, and on some of the Regional Commissions were organised through a dedicated and secure remote electronic voting system overseen by an independent legal expert;
- the Assembly welcomed Saint Vincent and the Grenadines as a new Member of the Organisation.

### **3.1.1.2 Council**

Chaired by Dr Idoyaga Benítez (Paraguay), President of WOAHA, the Council met four times in 2023: from 28 February to 2 March (virtual meeting), on 19 May (face-to-face in Paris), from 26 to 28 September (face-to-face in Paris) and on 13 December (virtual meeting).

During the March meeting, the Council supported the preparation of the 90th General Session (2023), validated its programme and administrative and technical working documents, and approved the modalities and practical arrangements designed to ensure its smooth running. The Council supported, for the second year in a row, the proposal by the Director General for a 15% increase in Members' statutory contributions.

At the meeting in May, the Council collaborated with the Director General on finalising the organisation of the General Session, including the validation of the last working documents.

The September meeting was the opportunity to welcome the new members of the Council elected during the 90th General Session: Dr Susana Guedes Pombo (Portugal) as Vice-President and Dr Wilmer Juárez (Nicaragua) as member representing the Americas. This meeting mainly focused on the external and independent review of WOAHA's Basic Texts and on other key initiatives supporting the implementation of the Seventh Strategic Plan for 2021–2025.

WOAHA regularly invited its Council members to engage with Members at regional level. In addition to participating in important events organised in their respective regions, in most cases remotely, the members of the Council were regularly in contact with the Delegates in their respective regions to prepare for and report on meetings of the Council and to consult them on relevant issues, notably during Regional Core Group (RCG) meetings. These informal consultative meetings support WOAHA's strategy implementation.

More information regarding the activities of the WOAHA Council can be found in document *91 GS/Adm-12*. Moreover, the minutes of the Council meetings are published on the WOAHA Delegate Portal.

### **3.1.1.3 Regional Commissions**

The five Regional Commissions of WOAHA are represented by their respective Bureaus, which are institutional elected bodies and key actors in the work of the Organisation. The Bureaus of the Regional Commissions act as a bridge between WOAHA and the Members of its respective regions. They exercise an advisory role by ensuring that regional needs are well communicated to and addressed by the Organisation. Their role and internal rules are available in their [Terms of Reference](#).

Regional Commissions meet every two years in a Conference format to discuss topics of regional interest. During 2023, three face-to-face Conferences were successfully organised: the 25th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa, held in Gaborone, Botswana; the 17th Conference of the Regional Commission for the Middle East, held in Riyadh, Saudi Arabia; and the 33rd Conference of the Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific, held in New Delhi, India. All these Conferences had a rich content agenda developed in collaboration with the respective Regional Core Groups and addressing topics of key regional interest, including two main technical items that allowed each Regional Commission to adopt recommendations to be submitted to the Assembly for endorsement (document *91 GS/Adm-02*). The final reports of these three Conferences are available on the respective regional websites ([Africa](#), [Asia and the Pacific](#) and the [Middle East](#)).

The three Conferences had an excellent level of attendance. The Africa Conference had a total of 113 participants, comprising WOAHA Delegates and representatives of 43 Members of the Region and senior officers from 15 regional and international organisations. The Middle East Conference had a total of 57 participants from 10 Members and eight regional and international organisations. The Asia and the Pacific Conference had a total of 81 participants from 24 Members and 10 regional and international organisations.

Finally, in 2023, WOAHA also organised the meetings of the Regional Commissions during the 90th General Session, as is the case every year. These meetings, organised in a virtual format, provided an excellent opportunity for the Commissions to discuss internal issues, such as nominations for partial elections, selection of technical items, activity planning, among others.

### **3.1.2 Activities of the Regional Core Groups**

To better facilitate communication within the region and better support the work of the Regional Commission, a Regional Core Group (RCG) was initially established by the Regional Commission for Asia and the Pacific in 2011. The Regional Commission for Europe subsequently adapted its own internal communication process (initially named Regional Task Force) with a similar approach and renamed it RCG in 2017. In a given region, the RCG is composed primarily of the four members of the Regional Commission Bureau and the members of the Council representing that region (in some regions the RCG includes additional observers).

In 2018, WOAHA developed guidelines based on the internal rules and operational processes of the RCGs of Asia and the Pacific and Europe. These guidelines served as a reference for Africa to start implementing the same communication mechanism in 2018, while the Middle East established its RCG in 2021 and the Americas region, which had been managing its internal communication in a similar way, officialised it as the RCG during its Regional Conference in 2022, in order to harmonise the concept in all the regions.

The main tasks of the RCG are to better link and coordinate the work of the Bureau, the Council and WOAHA (at regional and Headquarters levels) in order to better address regional needs and facilitate regional inputs to the work of the Organisation.

Since the establishment of this communication mechanism, there has been a noticeable improvement in intra-regional communication, with the formalisation of internal communication between the members of the Bureau of the Regional Commission and the corresponding regional members of the Council. WOAHA Members have become more actively involved in the development of the agendas for the Conferences and meetings of their respective Regional Commissions. Member engagement ensures that the topics included in the agendas are in line with regional needs and expectations. A common feature of the Regional Commission Conferences in 2023 was One Health, indicating the priority given to this topic within the Regions. This communication mechanism also facilitates the prioritisation of activities to better support the work of the Regional Commission in alignment with WOAHA's Strategic Plan and with regional needs, including facilitating the implementation of global strategies at regional level in a way that better adapts them to regional specificities. The Asia and the Pacific Region has even developed a regional work plan framework to better guide the work of the Regional Commission and its active

participation in WOAAH activities. Moreover, the RCG has become a space for dialogue that enables Regional Commissions to prepare their participation in key events such as the General Session; facilitates discussions on topics of regional interest including decisions taken at regional level and the submission of proposals, requests or feedback to WOAAH; and strengthens relations within the region, including with the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations and WOAAH Headquarters, which ensures more coordinated and inclusive work. It has also facilitated the dialogue within regions regarding the WOAAH standard-setting process and thereby sensitised Members in each region to the importance of participating more actively in the process.

### **3.1.3 Relationships with Members**

Several meetings with Embassies as well as with Ministers and high-level delegations of Members visiting Paris took place in 2023 and provided an opportunity to discuss Members' needs and strengthen mutual cooperation.

In addition to attending the three Conferences of Regional Commissions, held in Botswana, Saudi Arabia and India, respectively, the Director General visited the South Pacific on the occasion of a South Pacific Community (SPC) Agriculture Ministerial meeting. She took the opportunity to promote the Organisation and emphasise the benefits of becoming a WOAAH Member.

For their part, the Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives met with Members of their respective regions at events organised in different countries.

Calls for Members' statutory financial contributions were sent out, as were reminders to those Members in arrears, while taking into account the various situations of Members in this respect. In 2023, no Members changed their contribution category. Three Members contributed in category A and one Member in category B.

### **3.1.4 Agreements**

The Organisation renewed its Memoranda of Understanding with the International Livestock Research Institute (ILRI) and the World Veterinary Association (WVA), respectively.

In addition, the Quadripartite Organisations (WOAH, WHO, FAO, UNEP) renewed the Memorandum of Understanding entered into in 2022 regarding Cooperation to Combat Health Risks at the Animal–Human–Ecosystems Interface in the Context of the 'One Health' Approach and Including Antimicrobial Resistance.

### **3.1.5 Analysis and evaluation of WOAAH's institutional, technical, and financial governance**

Work to review WOAAH's Basic Texts progressed significantly during 2023 following the arrival in the Legal Affairs Unit of a secondee from the Australian Government Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry in late 2022. A review of the Basic Texts was prompted by issues identified with the elections of the Specialist Commissions (in 2021) and advice from the Council that a comprehensive independent and external review of WOAAH's Basic Texts would be advantageous.

In early 2023, discussions were held with key stakeholders (including representatives from the OECD and the International Centre for Parliamentary Studies) to ensure the proposed approach for the review was aligned with international best practice. Tender documents were developed, and a competitive procurement process was launched in March 2023<sup>7</sup>. A strong field of applications were received and a consortium, formed by Mr Eelco Szabo (lead) and Mr Juan Llobera, was selected. The consortium possessed an excellent legal background and relevant experience within international organisations suited to the activity.

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<sup>7</sup> The activity previously referred to as the 'external review of the Basic Texts' was renamed the 'Analysis and evaluation of WOAAH's institutional, technical and financial governance' to increase the appeal to potential tenderers during the procurement process.

The consortium commenced the analysis in August 2023. A desktop-based methodology was used that included:

- a review of over 100 resolutions and other supporting documents;
- workshops with the Council, the WOAH Executive and Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives;
- interviews with Delegates (15), Specialist Commission members (8) and relevant WOAH staff.

The consortium's report (Document *91 GS/Adm-13*) was validated by the Council in December 2023. The report is significant as it provides a comprehensive description of WOAH's governance arrangements, which have evolved since its establishment in 1924. The report also provides a broad range of recommendations to address identified issues, gaps and inconsistencies within WOAH's governance arrangements. During its 91st General Session, the Assembly will be invited to decide on the approach for further work to enhance WOAH governance arrangements based on the recommendations.

## **3.2. General Administration**

### **3.2.1 Human Resources**

In 2023, the Organisation continued its efforts to implement a human resources (HR) policy based on efficiency, equity and diversity. Our objective is to support the executive management in their strategic plans by implementing workforce planning in order to offer the Organisation the appropriate people with the right skills at the required place and time and at an appropriate cost.

#### **a. Workforce**

Therefore, the Human Resources Unit is closely involved in the budgetary dialogue with the Budget Unit and the Engagement and Investment Department (World Animal Health and Welfare Fund [World Fund]) so that Organisation's workforce can be better managed and future requirements anticipated.

As of 31 December 2023, the Organisation had 284 staff members, 66% of whom worked at Headquarters and 34% in the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations. Seventy-three nationalities were represented among WOAH staff: 58 at Headquarters and 36 in the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations. Women made up a slight majority (55%) of WOAH's overall staff; 78% of female staff were working at Headquarters and 22% in the regional offices. At Headquarters, the average age of staff members was 42 years (7% of staff were aged under 30, 68% aged between 30 and 50 and 25% aged over 50) and the average length of service (excluding seconded staff) was 6 years, as was the case in 2022, 2021, 2020, 2019 and 2018.

In 2023, 51% of staff members were financed by the WOAH Regular Budget, 37% by the World Fund and 12% were financed directly by Members through secondment agreements.

In 2023, five staff members changed departments or moved from a Representation to the Headquarters and 47 new staff members were recruited, 39 at Headquarters and eight in the Regions. A total of 25 new WOAH staff members were recruited to fill newly created positions: 19 positions at Headquarters (including 9 new positions financed by the Regular Budget) and six in the Regions.

In October 2023, following the resignation of the Head of the HR Unit, a senior HR consultant was hired on a 6-month temporary contract to ensure the continuity of the HR activity, manage the HR team and initiate key pending HR projects, such as the securing of HR data via a new HR Information System. The procedure to recruit a permanent Senior Head of the HR Unit was launched on 8 December 2023.

Hosting secondees from WOAH Members is still very important for the Organisation. For instance, the Memorandum of Co-operation regarding the Junior Professional Officers Programme between the Government of Japan and WOAH, signed in October 2022, is being renewed. It allows junior talents to be assigned to WOAH Headquarters or any of the WOAH Regional or Sub-Regional Offices to carry out field missions, and it contributes to a mutual enrichment of both the Organisation and the candidates, professionally, socially and culturally.



## **b. Talent management**

In addition to the recruitment and follow-up of administrative staff, various training actions have been implemented.

Three corporate development priorities were identified and training or workshop sessions were organised in 2023:

- strengthening managerial skills (a pilot scheme involving the Heads of Department was launched);
- improvement of organisational skills;
- due to our multicultural nature: strengthening knowledge of WOA's three official languages.

Thus, corporate training actions in 2023 were mainly focused on: strengthening internal cooperation through the continuation of training in the three official languages of WOA and the implementation of team management workshops and soft skills training, such as organisational skills workshops and a dedicated workshop to support Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives in their role.

The training effort to support the continuous evolution of the Organisation remained substantial, representing a total of 1,834 hours of training, including approximately 1,400 hours of language courses in which 70 staff members were enrolled in 2023 (37 staff members for French courses, 20 staff members for English courses, and 13 staff members for Spanish courses), and 434 hours of theme-based training, which benefitted 111 staff members. In total, these training efforts involved nearly 39% of the Organisation's staff.

## **d. Quality of work life**

The Organisation is committed to preventing and reducing psychosocial risks and ensuring a better quality of life at work.

The free counselling support offered by WOA since 2022 through the Stimulus Care Services online portal did not provide the level of response that had been expected from employees in need of emotional support, and was consequently halted in July 2023.

The Organisation is now considering a more targeted approach that will include the appropriate HR solutions, both individual and collective, for our different categories of personnel (management staff, staff in Regions, staff at Headquarters, etc.). The HR Unit has finalised a recommendation in this respect, which is currently being reviewed by the Director General.

On 2 March 2023, WOA introduced a 'Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority' policy for the purpose of maintaining a work environment that is free from intimidation, hostility or offensive behaviour, and particularly any form of harassment. It seeks to implement measures to prevent inappropriate behaviour from escalating into harassment and details the processes to be followed in such instances, pursuant to the guiding principles contained in WOA's Code of Conduct, specifically those under the Tact and Courtesy and Use of Power sections, as well as the values and guiding principles established in WOA's Seventh Strategic Plan.

This policy applies to staff members engaged by the Director General, regardless of the type or duration of their engagement with the Organisation and the location of their post (Headquarters or Regional/Sub-Regional Representations). The policy describes the procedures to be followed with regard to both complainants and alleged offenders. The policy is applicable to interns, secondees, members of WOA's governing bodies, visitors attending WOA events, as well as personnel of external contractors.

Also in 2023, the HR Unit commissioned an external expert to conduct the first phase of an actuarial study in order to assess the solvency, equity and efficiency of the WOA Pension Scheme. The second phase will be conducted in 2024 to consider improvements for staff members at Headquarters and in the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations to benefit from an improved and sustainable Scheme.

To promote equity within the Organisation, a Gender Equity Plan has been implemented with the help of the Gender Task Force, and two staff members are being recruited with specific World Fund funding to support this initiative.

A new team of Staff Representatives was elected on 22 May 2023. Meetings with the new Staff Representatives are held quarterly. They provide an opportunity for regular information and consultation on topics such as the Gender Equity Plan and the Pension Scheme.

The work-from-home policy, initiated in 2020, has been regularly updated since then to adjust to the Organisation's needs. The policy allows a better work-life balance and reduces commuter stress, without affecting staff productivity.

Lastly, in order to cushion the impact of strong inflation in some of the Regions and Sub-Regions where WOAHA has an office, a specific and exceptional allowance was paid in 2023 and will also be provisioned and paid in 2024 to those Staff members whose purchasing power decrease the most significantly. This measure fosters equity throughout the Organisation as a similar mechanism exists for the staff at Headquarters.

### 3.2.2 Gender

In 2023, the main activities of the WOAHA Gender Task Force (GTF), created in October 2021 included (i) building awareness of gender integration among WOAHA Members and staff through various communications, (ii) mapping gender-related initiatives of other, similar organisations, and (iii) commissioning several studies, covering the following topics: [gender in animal health emergencies](#), [gender analysis in South-East Asia](#), gender and workforce development in West Africa; gender in the PVS Pathway.

In an effort to engage with its stakeholders and delve into the topic of gender roles in the veterinary domain, the GTF organised the first-ever World Café event on gender, held on the sidelines of the 90th General Session in Paris. This interactive workshop brought together 30 participants including Delegates, representatives from national governments, non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and WOAHA staff. The event's outcomes were summarised in a [Bulletin](#) article. Concomitantly, the GTF kicked off a series of interviews with a number of women in leadership roles in the veterinary sector. These consultations raised interesting themes around workforce development, new styles of leadership, and conditions that are conducive to promoting equality at work. In addition to the interviews already published<sup>8</sup>, an article synthesising the main themes will be released in 2024.

A significant milestone was achieved in October 2023 with WOAHA's signing of the Sustaining Action for Gender Equality grant agreement with the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation. This four-year programme will allow WOAHA to hire two full-time gender experts, strategically positioned to support the Organisation in advancing its gender-related work, with attention also being given to equality, disability and social inclusion (GEDSI). The intended goal is to "*ensure that all WOAHA stakeholders are fully included and empowered to benefit from WOAHA's work on standards, data integration, animal health tools and services, capacity building as well as to access knowledge, information and tools, to act appropriately to improve the public good.*" The two open positions are expected to be filled in the first half of 2024. They will support the GTF in implementing its work plan and advocating for the inclusion of a gender lens across WOAHA's mandate, through its strategic plan, policies, projects and activities.

Since its inception, the GTF has received in-kind support from several external experts and has continuously grown its network of resource partners. Thus, in 2023, WOAHA benefitted from several grants from the following resource partners to conduct gender-related work: *Agence française de développement* (AFD); Government of Australia; Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation; Global Affairs Canada.

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<sup>8</sup> Nigeria: published on the [RR-Africa](#); Argentina: published on the [RR-Americas website](#); Asia region: published on the [SRR-Asia website](#)

### 3.2.3 General Services

The General Services Unit plays a vital role in providing ongoing support to the Headquarters teams thereby ensuring the smooth running of various activities. Its responsibilities include maintaining safe working conditions for all WOH staff, overseeing the property management of the two headquarters buildings, monitoring insurance coverage (excluding staff health insurance), managing mail and supplies, ordering and delivery of appropriate office furniture (including items related to remote working under the work-from-home policy), facilitating visa applications, handling physical archiving and digitization and maintaining WOH's inventory.

In addition to its usual activities, since 2019 the Unit has integrated specific tasks that are currently underway.

One notable project involves the General Services Unit conducting a real estate project evaluation.

In 2023, a call for tenders was initiated to identify a suitable provider capable of defining the best real estate strategy for the Organisation. The recommendations will be presented to the Council along with the 2024 activities.

Regarding the security of staff and property, the Unit is actively involved in the establishment of a common normative reference framework for security, covering the Headquarters and the regional and sub-regional offices. In order to improve the security of Regional and Sub-Regional Representations, a security procedure in a degraded environment was sent to all offices setting out the actions to be taken in anticipation of a deterioration of the security situation in the region as well as the procedures to be followed during events endangering the safety of our staff and/or our offices. These procedures were implemented in 2023 in our offices in Bamako, Moscow, Nairobi and Beirut. Particular attention was paid to the Bamako office, where implementation of the security recommendations that had been launched in 2021 was finalised. The implementation of security recommendations specific to each Regional and Sub-Regional Representation is in progress and will henceforth be a recurring activity of the General Services Unit.

Concerning security during duty missions, WOH, in collaboration with its insurer, has launched a mobile application to provide enhanced support to WOH staff and PVS experts to enhance their safety in the performance of their duties. This application, with extensive country-specific information, is available to all WOH staff and experts. The Unit is constantly working to update the application. As a result, agents are now able to report their location and indicate whether they are safe or not in the context of the missions they are undertaking and the countries they are in, and they have access to emergency numbers and procedures for dealing with accidents. Since 2023, in close collaboration with the Capacity-Building Department, the General Services Unit has been providing a detailed security risk analysis prior to every PVS mission, which sometimes leads to a decision to conduct the mission remotely.

The Unit successfully managed and hosted no fewer than 90 meetings at Headquarters as well as a number of external events, ensuring a safe and secure environment for both guests and agents. Managing the security, catering and logistical aspects of WOH's General Sessions is also an integral part of the Unit's responsibilities.

In its day-to-day operations, the General Services Unit ensures the implementation of cost-cutting measures while maintaining service quality through the introduction of new digital working methods. The overall objective is to optimise all tasks to ensure faster and more efficient service delivery.

Following the implementation of the paper reduction policy established by the Directorate General and the online publication of previously printed works, the activities of the reprography workshop have been reoriented. Thus, the digitization of all documents and archives at Headquarters is underway and is gradually becoming the main activity of the workshop to the detriment of paper printing. However, we maintain a printing activity that is lower in volume but has gained in quality, thus allowing the use of labelled materials such as eco-responsible recycled paper. In a desire to make full use of the existing equipment, the production of media linked to rebranding (business cards, letterheads, envelopes with logos, etc.) is now carried out by the reprography workshop

which therefore replaces external suppliers and thus generates a reduction in costs while guaranteeing shorter production times. In the space of three years, we went from producing 770,000 printed pages to 70,000 pages.

In parallel with this reduction in production, we now guarantee the recycling of almost all of our paper and replace plastic with more environmentally friendly materials.

### 3.2.4 Information systems

In 2023, WOAAH delivered some key projects linked to the digital transformation of the Organisation whilst maintaining a high level of service support for its staff.

WOAH is continuing to define and develop its IT project delivery model with the implementation of an agile project methodology to enable an iterative bite-sized delivery model.

Optimisation of the IT Portfolio Project management process enabled the successful delivery of a number of core projects in 2023, as described below.

Improvements have been made to enable Delegates to access the **voting platform** via the Delegate Portal, which builds on our on-going improvements to simplify access to the WOAAH platforms.

The **official status management platform**, delivered in 2023, enables annual reconfirmation reporting for WOAAH Members. This provides a more efficient way for Members to submit these reports, which is both more transparent and easier to access. This platform also facilitates the work of the Disease Status Department and improves the services provided to Members.

The **Reference Centres annual reports platform** replaces an obsolete application and allows our partners to access annual reports with a single identification and password.

A reference solution for the **voluntary report on non-WOAH-listed diseases in wildlife** enables Members to continue to report on non-WOAH-listed diseases in wildlife while WOAAH considers options to further enhance and develop a platform for the reporting of these diseases.

In addition, some technical projects were delivered to provide support in the following areas:

- Improvements to WOAAH's financial and budgetary management practices.
- Expansion of the collaboration toolset, allowing WOAAH to share information and work more readily with external partners, while also tightening security across our collaboration platforms.
- Evolution of the WAHIS helpdesk from an incident only service by implementing a service catalogue to support requests for common services, such as requests for maps of animal diseases.

In late 2023, an interim Head of IT was on-boarded and will be in charge of continuing the ongoing digital transformation of WOAAH while maintaining business-as-usual operations and building cyber resilience across WOAAH's platforms. The interim Head of IT will help to drive the digital agenda to enable WOAAH to build platforms that will be able to utilise new technologies such as artificial intelligence.

### 3.2.5 Coordination of events

Many events and travel arrangements are handled by the Events Coordination Unit, in support of WOAAH's activities.

In 2023, 1,425 travel arrangements were booked for staff members, consultants, Members' representatives, and experts. The trend in the number of travel arrangements has increased significantly in the post-COVID years.

Processes and scope have been optimised to improve operational production and planning capacity within the Unit and throughout the Organisation. In practice, this has included the following:

- development of a travel policy and travel guidelines coupled with support for their implementation;
- development of a Global Events Roadmap consisting of comprehensive planning of all the events organised by the Organisation;
- preparation of a call for tenders from travel agents, to be published in early 2024.

Moreover, four major events were organised in 2023 with the direct support of the Events Coordination Unit:

- The Global Conference on Emergency Management, held in Paris, France, on 3-5 April. This brought together 345 attendees to discuss emergencies that involve or impact animals.
- The 90th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates, held in Paris, France, on 21-25 May.
- The EBO-SURSY Project Closing events, held in Saly, Senegal, on 9-13 October. This event gathered 139 attendees.
- PPR GREN meeting, held in Bangalore, India, from 28 November to 2 December. This was a hybrid event with 120 attendees.

### **3.2.6 Communication**

Throughout 2023, WOA's communication and public advocacy work continued to evolve strongly across a variety of channels. On average, engagement increased by 30% on social media platforms. On Twitter (X), for instance, WOA has become an even more significant voice on animal health and welfare, with a sizeable footprint of 320,000 followers at 31 December 2023. This represents a 35% growth and an extremely strong upward development from just 30,000 followers in 2020. To put this number into perspective, our sizeable partner FAO currently has 660,000 followers on the platform. With this growing influence, WOA has become increasingly present in global, timely conversation on core topics.

Key issues such as rabies, avian influenza, AMR and the Observatory featured prominently in 2023. An additional notable main effort was undertaken to develop a comprehensive campaign on Animal Health in Emergencies, with outstanding results. The campaign included a three-part high-end documentary series produced in collaboration with Members and other partners in Lebanon, the Philippines and the Caribbean, and viewed over 325,000 times by 31 December 2023. In total, WOA appeared on over 40.3 million screens and reached an audience of 30.6 million comprised of concerned members of the public, veterinarians and other technical and non-technical audiences. Guided by data analysis, new successful formats were introduced on social media, such as 'Ask a WOA Expert', disease guides and cards as well as quizzes, which significantly increased interest in topics like Nipah virus, FMD and AMR. The response to trending topics in a timelier manner on issues such as HPAI in cats, HPAI in Antarctica and Nipah virus has exponentially helped to attract audiences to our cause. In the media, WOA has been featured in prime international outlets. Close to 40 articles have been published, including by the BBC, The Guardian, Bloomberg and Reuters and through other, specialised, veterinary-focused outlets. In total, WOA created over 2,300 social media posts in 2023.

Some priority highlights include:

- The 90th General Session and the continued significant effort to position the event as the leading global forum on animal health and welfare beyond the walls of the event yielded significant results. The total reach of content produced for the media and social media increased by a factor of six, compared to 2022.



- Much effort went into the launch of the Observatory report, reaching over 13 million accounts and readers. The best performing webpage covered the topic of transparency, and the most-read fact sheet featured the issue of self-declarations.
- The impact of WOAAH's 2022 Annual Report also slightly improved year-on-year, the best performing pages being those on wildlife.
- WOAAH also executed the first joint campaign between the Headquarters' and regional social media accounts, with ASF Awareness for Summer Travellers on social media, performing well across WOAAH Global, WOAAH Americas and WOAAH Asia, reaching almost 16 million people (Americas: 6 million; Asia: 7.8 million; and Global: 2 million).
- Our communications for World Rabies Day 2023 underscored our Organisation's commitment to advocate on rabies and vaccination, as well as highlighting the benefits of WOAAH's vaccine bank. New communication tools and content were developed and were seen by nearly 21 million people, indicating increased interest and engagement within communities online.
- An extensive communication campaign was implemented to launch the [Animal Antimicrobial Use platform](#) including interviews, a press release and an infographic to facilitate digital audience engagement. Results could be seen, with the materials appearing on over 6 million screens and reaching a targeted audience of over 4.3 million in Fleming Fund and Multi-Partner Trust Fund (MPTF) priority countries.

According to the available 2023 data, mentions of WOAAH in the digital sphere increased by 76% compared to 2022, primarily through news sources such as the BBC, Reuters and CNN. Top countries that mentioned the Organisation included the United States of America, People's Republic of China, Japan, Argentina, India, Spain, United Kingdom, Mexico, Australia and France.

Constant time investment on impact evaluation and data reporting on WOAAH's activities has helped forge an increasingly data-oriented approach to the development and assessment of plans and strategies.

In 2023, a comprehensive data-driven stocktaking exercise highlighted the evolution and the results of communication and public advocacy work at WOAAH since the launch of its new vision. After a presentation to WOAAH's Executive Committee (COMEX), a webinar was organised for all staff to inform and engage on WOAAH's successful work and its impact. Around 150 colleagues attended from across the regions providing positive feedback on this reporting exercise. Furthermore, the presentation has been used with regional colleagues, during training of Focal Points for Communication and at other meetings. As a result, there has been further increased clarity, understanding and acceptance among staff for the direction of communication and public advocacy, including the further establishment of the new brand and its narrative.

The branding has moved into a consolidated phase across WOAAH. Branding guidelines have been further evolved to cover corporate platforms, such as ANIMUSE and WAHIS. A dedicated mailbox has been created to streamline all branding requests and to channel the ongoing work of the correct brand implementation.

Preparations for the year-long anniversary campaign have been significantly stepped up, as reflected in an established strategy development, an established working group as well as detailed production and editorial planning. A comprehensive briefing note on the progress made was presented to the Council and at the meeting of the Regional Representatives.

### **3.2.7 Advocacy**

Global health crises faced in recent decades, whether in the animal health sector (avian influenza) or the human health sector (severe acute respiratory syndrome [SARS], Ebola, COVID-19), have brought WOAAH's work and mandate into sharper focus. The vital role of animal health within the context of global challenges, beyond the health sector, has gained growing recognition as WOAAH has increased its presence and visibility at high-level fora such as the G7, the G20, the World Health Summit and COPs (climate change and biodiversity). Greater awareness of the need for cross-sectoral collaboration to address these challenges and build a healthier, more equitable



world is leading the Organisation to build more diverse partnerships. This provides more opportunities to advocate for improved animal health in a wider range of fora. WOAHA must use this momentum to strengthen its voice in the global policy dialogue and continue to 'advocate for a sense of shared responsibility for safeguarding animal health and welfare', in line with Objective SO4 of the Seventh Strategic Plan and to consolidate its position as the leading international body in the animal health sector. WOAHA's close involvement in these discussions also guarantees that the voices of Members and their Veterinary Services are heard.

Increased visibility at all levels calls for a better structured, unified and consistent institutional position on key issues. WOAHA's stance needs to be evidenced-based, clear and strong to ensure that it remains the unique, credible and listened-to voice on animal health. In the lead up to the centenary celebrations and the redefinition of WOAHA's Basic Texts, a new approach to advocacy has been developed to strengthen WOAHA's political presence on issues of importance to the Organisation and to influence opinion. A new role of Advocacy Advisor has therefore been created, with the following objectives:

- To identify strategic advocacy priorities for the Organisation.
- To raise WOAHA's profile with decision-makers, in particular, policy-makers, investment partners and other relevant audiences.
- To ensure that WOAHA's vision and positioning on priority topics are clear and well understood by Members, as well as institutional, technical, and financial partners, concerned citizens, other audiences.
- To secure long-term political, technical and financial support for WOAHA's various initiatives and amplify our calls to action.
- Within this framework, WOAHA developed and disseminated a number of advocacy products in 2023. They included a [Vision Paper on Animal Welfare](#), several Position Statements on [African swine fever and the use of sub-standard vaccines](#), and on the [use of antimicrobials as growth promoters](#). A Policy Brief on [Avian influenza vaccination and trade](#) was also published. Other products are under development for 2024, notably on the topics of sustainable animal farming and antimicrobial resistance.

### **3.2.8 Legal affairs**

WOAHA's Legal Affairs Unit plays an important role in ensuring the legal framework of the Organisation's operations and advises the Office of the Director General and all departments/units on a wide range of operational and governance matters, primarily in connection with complex contracts, litigation, procurement and relationships with Members and partners. Legal advice is also provided on issues relating to the Organisation's Basic Texts, privileges and immunities and other institutional matters.

In 2023, the Legal Affairs Unit contributed to several key areas, ranging from the management of elections to international civil service law matters and the launch of the comprehensive external review of WOAHA's Basic Texts. In particular, the Legal Affairs Unit played a crucial role in the negotiation and signing of a Headquarters Agreement between the Organisation and the Government of the United Arab Emirates, outlining inter alia the special status accorded to the Organisation's office, its premises and personnel. The signing took place in June 2023 in Abu Dhabi. In addition, the Legal Affairs Unit contributed to the ongoing negotiations with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs of the Kingdom of Thailand regarding a Headquarters Agreement.

### **3.2.9 Performance management**

#### **Management of performance and internal control**

For WOAHA, 2023 was a year of consolidation and strategic progress, with the emphasis on improving internal processes and effective management of risks. This period was marked by a strong commitment to implementing the Seventh Strategic Plan.

### **3.2.9.1 Performance management**

In 2023, WOAHA made significant progress with executing the Seventh Strategic Plan, applying a rigorous approach to monitoring its strategic objectives. This approach was reflected by the presentation by strategic objective given during the General Session, providing a clear overview of the state of advancement of the Plan. For more detailed information on the approaches used to implement the Strategic Plan and the results achieved, see [Section 1 above](#).

### **3.2.9.2 Internal control**

#### **Risk management**

The role of the Audit Committee, chaired by the Director General and composed of seven members representing the different areas of activity of WOAHA, having been revitalised in 2022, was substantially strengthened, with the Committee orchestrating the follow-up of the External Auditor's report and the creation of an internal audit plan.

This led to the launch of specific outsourced internal audits:

- An actuarial study to evaluate the durability and sustainability of the WOAHA pension scheme
- An audit on management of the WAHIS project
- An audit on data governance
- An audit on the state of play of WOAHA's digital transformation.

The results of these audits were presented at the end of the year at a meeting of the Audit Committee, thus laying the foundations for targeted corrective actions and greater control of priority risks.

At the same time, efforts were made to follow up and implement the recommendations resulting from previous external audits, thereby demonstrating WOAHA's commitment to continuous improvement.

The incident management system, initiated in 2022, was extended to include all members of staff.

Details of the functioning of the Audit Committee were presented to the Council at the end of September, marking an important step in putting in place an internal control and risk management system.

#### **Internal control environment/processes and procedures approach**

WOAHA has established a new financial policy framework, coupled with numerous standard operating procedures, aimed at greater transparency and optimisation of the budget process. These measures reflect WOAHA's ongoing commitment to operational excellence and strong governance, laying the solid foundations needed to embrace the challenges and opportunities that lie ahead.

### **3.2.10 Regional and Sub-Regional Representation business model**

In 2023, WOAHA continued to provide better support and guidance to the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations in order to facilitate the effective execution of regional activities to efficiently support Members. In that respect, an exercise was conducted during the Annual Meeting of the Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives to give the Representatives the opportunity to better highlight the impact of their activities at regional level. The exercise was conducted in conjunction with training on strategic communication and reporting.

In 2023, WOAHA continued its work on the manual of procedures of the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations. During the year, the revision of the existing manual was completed and an outline for the future edition of the manual was drawn up. The process of identifying the Director General's decisions, notes and policies that will need to be included in the future manual was also initiated.

### 3.3. Financial management

#### 3.3.1 Budget and financial management

Please refer to the documents referenced *91 GS/Fin-01* for more detailed information.

In April 2023, within the framework of maintaining a budgetary dialogue with its Members, WOAAH shared a note with Members explaining its decision to request an increase of the statutory contributions by 15%. This request was due in part to an extremely high OECD-Total Consumer Price Index (CPI), this index being taken into account when calculating statutory contributions, as provided for in Resolution No 15 of May 2018.

This increase, adopted by Members in May 2023, has helped WOAAH to contend with the financial challenges due to an inherent misalignment between critical organisational activities and Members' financial commitments, with statutory contributions continuing to decline as an overall percentage of the consolidated budget of the Organisation.

#### 3.3.2 Budget funding and implementation in 2023

WOAH makes use of all sources of funds provided through Members' statutory contributions, voluntary contributions from Members and other resource partners and additional sources of revenue to implement the work programme and accomplish the Seventh Strategic Plan.

The Organisation's budgetary framework comprises three components, each using a specific budgetary structure: Regular Budget, World Animal Health and Welfare Fund (World Fund) Estimates, and Regional and Sub-Regional Representations Estimates. Financial performance in 2023 is summarised in the table below, whereas document *91 GS/Fin-01* reports on the Organisation's financial performance using the established indicators.

Document *91 GS/Fin-01* describes in detail WOAAH's financial performance in 2023.

**Table 5. WOAAH Budget**

	Approved budget / Estimated budget	Actual income	Actual expenditure	Funding level (%)
Regular Budget (RB)	€ 19.5 million	€ 19.5 million	€ 19.4 million	37%
World Fund (WF)	€ 21.5 million	€ 30.5 million	€ 30.5 million	59%
Regional and Sub-Regional Representations (funding from RB and WF excluded)	€ 2.7 million	€ 2.8 million	€ 1.9 million	4%

#### — Regular Budget

Regular Budget income is principally comprised of statutory contributions from Members to fund the work programme. These funds are the most flexible and predictable source of funding for the Organisation as they are the 'dues' that Members are required to pay.

In 2023, the recovery rate of statutory contributions and arrears was higher than in previous year (96 % in 2023 versus 90% in 2022). Three Members contributed to Extraordinary Category A and one Member in Extraordinary Category B. Extraordinary contributions provide an important funding margin, helping to minimise dependency on voluntary contributions.

In 2023, Regular Budget income totalled €19,5 million while expenditure totalled €19,4 million (*91 GS/Fin-01*).

## — World Animal Health and Welfare Fund

WOAH's World Animal Health and Welfare Fund (World Fund) is a multi-donor trust fund collecting voluntary contributions to support the implementation of WOA's mandate and Strategic Plans thereby complementing the Regular Budget. The voluntary contributions are garnered through the execution of grant agreements with Members (in addition to their statutory commitments) as well as international organisations, philanthropic foundations, the private sector and other, diverse funding sources.

In 2023, WOA's experienced a landmark achievement by securing voluntary contributions totalling € 37.87 million through the World Fund. This notable financial milestone reflects an unprecedented level of grants signed since the creation of the World Fund. Concurrently, WOA's received € 29.91 million in income, corresponding to its second-best year historically.

For a comprehensive understanding of financial performance, a detailed analysis is presented in the Financial Report (document *91 SG Fin-01*). This report meticulously outlines performance against the key financial indicators of the World Fund, offering transparency and accountability in WOA's commitment to the responsible management of financial resources.

In line with our Basic Texts, the Director General is assisted in overseeing the World Fund through a dedicated Management Committee and Advisory Committee, both convening annually.

The 16th Meeting of the Management Committee was held at WOA's Headquarters on 18 May 2023. Chaired by the Past President of WOA's, the Committee's deliberations encompassed a thorough review of the World Fund's financial performance and WOA's financial sustainability. The Committee approved the submission of the World Fund accounts, integral components of documents 90 SG/4 and 90 SG/5, to the Council for endorsement. Subsequently, these documents were adopted by the Assembly at the General Session in May 2023.

The 18th Meeting of the Advisory Committee Meeting marked a noteworthy return to in-person sessions and was held in Paris on 23 May 2023, during the 90th WOA's General Session. Chaired by Dr Hans Wyss, the Delegate of Switzerland to WOA's, the meeting was attended by 22 resource partner representatives and focused on acknowledging past achievements and aligning the World Fund with future initiatives. The agenda covered a comprehensive review of the World Fund's financial performance, strategic priorities requiring financial or political support, and insights from a survey detailing resource partners' perspectives. The results of the latter survey conducted among members of the World Fund Advisory Committee underlined their overall satisfaction with WOA's as a delivery partner thanks to the high return on investment and the unique service offering. WOA's 2023 investment priorities were also presented, highlighting six key future investment areas, requiring an additional € 19.1 million.

These two committees play an instrumental role in ensuring the sound management and strategic direction of the World Fund, thereby reinforcing our commitment to transparency, fiscal responsibility and the sustained success of WOA's mission.

### **3.3.3. 2024 and 2025 Budget planning and implementation**

In 2023, a massive work effort was undertaken to implement a revised financial management framework, including a budgetary commitment tool (Procure to Pay [P2P]). This framework comprises a revised and consolidated compilation of all of the Organisation's financial and procurement rules, processes and standard operating procedures. This framework and P2P will be fully operational for Headquarters and two Regional Offices (in Tokyo and Bangkok), with plans underway to systematically extend its implementation to all Regional Representations. This strategic initiative represents a significant milestone for the Organisation, with P2P enhancing WOA's budgetary planning processes, streamlining budget implementation and dynamically tracking and monitoring our consolidated budget in real-time, thereby optimising the roll-out of WOA's activities and fortifying our reporting capabilities to senior management and to Members.

In line with our continuous commitment to financial transparency and efficiency, WOAHA dedicated efforts throughout the year to refining its budgetary dialogue and processes. This focus resulted in the development of key financial documents, specifically *91 GS/Fin-04* (2024 Budget) and *91 GS/Fin-05* (2025 Budgeted Work Programme, Income Estimates, and Related Contribution Scale).

The revised presentation of these documents offers the Assembly a comprehensive understanding of the Organisation's budget for the financial years 2024 and 2025. This enhanced clarity is pivotal in facilitating the adoption of financial resolutions, ensuring informed decision-making and accountability. Our commitment to a structured budgetary process underscores our dedication to financial responsibility and effective governance.

### **3.3.4 Procurement**

WOAHA's procurement activities allow the Organisation to implement its strategy with operational objectives and frameworks, while contributing to cost optimisation and overall efficiency of its activities in compliance with the rules and regulations in force.

The Procurement Unit is currently composed of the Head of Unit, a Legal Procurement Senior Officer and an Assistant (working 4 days per week in the Unit).

In 2023, the Unit launched and managed 89 projects in the form of procurement contracts and amendments, 50 of which were signed for a total amount of € 3.4 million. Some of these contracts include conditional tranches that may be implemented in the future, which would then increase this total amount.

WOAHA procurement rules have continued to be better known within the Organisation and better implemented by the prescribing departments, through ongoing updating of WOAHA's internal Procurement portal (available in WOAHA's three official languages, including template documents).

One of the key achievements in 2023 was the implementation of a WOAHA e-tendering platform (available in WOAHA's three official languages). The platform guarantees transparency (the vast majority of WOAHA's call for tenders being published online), security in exchanges with tenderers and equal treatment between them. WOAHA has therefore definitively ended the submission of hard copies for all of its tendering procedures.

In view of the growing number of procurement activities and in order to be able to manage these activities, WOAHA will strengthen its Procurement team in 2024 by recruiting an additional legal procurement officer.

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