



## **78th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE**

### *A fresh impetus to the Organisation's outreach and visibility*

**14/10/2010** Last May, as every year, the national Delegates of the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) held their World Assembly at the Headquarters of our Organisation in Paris. As of September 2010, the OIE has 177 Members and several other countries are already engaged in the process of accession.

At this year's General Session, the Members honoured me with their trust by re-electing me to the post of Director General of the OIE for a third term of office. I accept this new challenge with the greatest enthusiasm and will do my utmost to address it during the years ahead, with the help of all the staff at the Headquarters in Paris, my colleagues at the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations and all the OIE's Members and partners.

Some 600 participants representing OIE Members and regional and national intergovernmental organisations took part in the proceedings of the 78th General Session of the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE. High level personalities, including H.R.H. Princess Haya Bint Al Hussein of Jordan and numerous Ministers of OIE Member Countries also honoured the Assembly with their presence.

The public most interested in the activities of the OIE, which traditionally comprised official veterinarians, livestock producers, rural veterinarians and exporters, now includes all owners of animals, consumers, the entire veterinary profession (including those involved in veterinary education), public health and environmental officials, and many other public and private sector players.

The work carried out during the General Session once again demonstrated that the improvement of animal health brings tangible benefits for human health (through zoonotic disease control, food security and food safety) and has an important role to play in economic development, poverty alleviation and food production.

The annual Assembly of Delegates is a unique event aimed at analysing world animal health policies, making it not only the culminating point in the updating of relevant international standards but also an unparalleled forum for discussion and exchange of views between Members and with public and private sector players with an interest in the animal world.

This year, the Assembly gave agrifood industry representatives the opportunity to present the private sector's point of view on the use of public and private standards within the context of international trade in animals and animal products. During the past twenty years, consumers throughout the world have become increasingly interested in animal production systems, food safety and animal welfare, prompting operators in the agrifood sector to develop private

standards to try to meet certain consumer requirements. One of the problems is the profusion of private standards and the resulting number of demands for private certification, which leads to the duplication of work and a costly proliferation of audit programmes that are sometimes prejudicial to the implementation of public certification.

The Assembly considered that the OIE and its partners should continue the dialogue with the agrifood industry and global private standard-setting bodies, notably to devise mechanisms to avoid potential conflicts between public standards and private standards.

Within the framework of the Assembly's standard-setting work, numerous standards were adopted or updated on such topics as conditions governing the use of animals in research and education, measures aimed at controlling antimicrobial resistance in aquatic animals and many others.

The Assembly's adoption of the Fifth Strategic Plan of the OIE for the period 2011-2015 confirmed the Organisation's previous strategic choices (relating to animal health information, scientific excellence, safety of world trade and animal welfare) while providing for strengthening its work in certain key areas such as essential basic curricula for initial and continuing veterinary education, food security, impact of climate and environmental changes on the emergence and occurrence of animal diseases, the link between animal production systems and climate change and the reduction of the risk of infectious diseases at the animal-human-ecosystems interface. The Strategic Plan also provides for an extension to the list of diseases for which the OIE can grant official recognition of status and an overall strengthening of the Organisation's work on aquatic animal health in view of its importance in future global food security scenarios.

The ambitious objective of strengthening Veterinary Services and the capacity building of key national players in the field of animal health and welfare, also included in the Fifth Strategic Plan, will be attained principally through the resources of the World Animal Health and Welfare Fund, with contributions in the form of multilateral, bilateral and other donations. Fulfilment of this objective will involve all Members of the OIE and its technical and financial partners, through programmes implemented notably by the OIE's worldwide network of Regional and Sub-Regional Representations.

The OIE intends to increase its actions in the face of new and complex challenges and to provide the responses that the international community is entitled to expect. In this respect, the OIE must strengthen still further its contribution to the prosperity and safety of our world.

**Dr Bernard Vallat**