

REPORT OF THE MEETING OF THE OIE REGIONAL COMMISSION
FOR ASIA, THE FAR EAST AND OCEANIA

Virtual meeting, 10 June 2020 (10am Bangkok, 12pm Tokyo, via Zoom)

The OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania met on 10 June 2020 via virtual meeting at 12pm Tokyo time. The meeting was attended by 54 participants, including Delegates and observers from Members of the Commission and observer countries/territories, and OIE staff from both the Regional Representation for Asia Pacific (RRAP) in Tokyo and Sub-Regional Representation for South East Asia (SRR-SEA) in Bangkok:

Australia, Bhutan, China P.R., Fiji, Hong Kong SAR, India, Indonesia, Iran, Japan, Malaysia, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Caledonia, New Zealand, the Philippines, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Chinese Taipei and Thailand.

The meeting was moderated by Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, and chaired by Dr Norio Kumagai, President of the Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania and Delegate of Japan, and Dr Mark Schipp, President of the OIE Council and Delegate of Australia.

Dr Kugita welcomed participants to the virtual meeting.

1. Opening remarks

Dr Norio Kumagai, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East, and Oceania, and Delegate of Japan thanked and welcomed the Delegates and representatives of the Regional Commission for the virtual meeting. He highlighted the challenges Veterinary Services (VS) in the region are facing during the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, and difficulties for the OIE resulting in postponement of several workshops and meetings including the 88th OIE General Session. While African swine fever (ASF) continues to be a priority, outbreaks of African horse sickness (AHS) in Thailand pose a new threat to our region.

This region plays key roles in OIE activities for reducing the risk of spill over of zoonotic diseases across the human-animal interface. This meeting is a good opportunity to learn what the OIE is doing in the face of COVID-19 and also what the responsibilities are for members. There is a need to explore potential regional activities relating to COVID-19 and wildlife, which should be included in the next regional work plan.

Dr Kumagai thanked Dr Schipp and the OIE regional offices for organizing this alternative meeting.

2. Activities of Regional Commission and Regional Representation

- RR/SRR activities (OIE RR)

Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific presented the key activities undertaken by the Regional Representation and Sub-Regional Representation since September 2019, and key upcoming activities. Some meetings were postponed but several have been converted to virtual meetings. Physical meetings will be considered when possible. Participants in today's meeting were advised to check the regional OIE website for information about events, including upcoming activities and also materials from completed events. Updates were also given on other OIE activities, including upcoming training on the new OIE-WAHIS scheduled for July 2020 and the current Delegate e-learning on the OIE Training portal.

Dr Asako Endo, Regional Veterinary Officer, OIE Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific (RRAP), gave a guided introduction to the recently updated regional OIE website for Asia and the Pacific. Dr Endo also described the recent inclusion of information on organisational chart of the VS of some members.

- Adapted procedure (OIE RR)

Dr Kugita outlined the "Adapted Procedure" as an exceptional interim measure by the OIE in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. All resolutions were adopted with strong support from Members. More details will soon be shared by the DG.

- OIE 7th Strategic Plan and Regional work plan for next five years (RC President)

Dr Okita Masatsugu from the Ministry of Agriculture Forestry and Fisheries (MAFF) Japan, representing the OIE Delegate of Japan, presented the status of development of the 7th Strategic Plan. The first draft has been developed and circulated to Delegates, and is already endorsed by the OIE Council. Owing to the ongoing pandemic, the Plan will be presented for adoption in May 2021 at the 88th OIE General Session. Dr Okita also highlighted that the Regional Work Plan Framework (2021-2025) for the Region will be developed in line with the new Strategic Plan.

There will be election of the OIE DG, Council Members, Regional Commission Bureau Members, and Specialist Commission Members during the next OIE General Session. Dr Okita mentioned the importance of the Regional Core Group, to deliver the regional voice to the OIE at the global level.

- Election of the Specialist Commission Members in May 2021 (RC President)

Dr Kugita explained the process of nominating experts from members to the Specialist Commission, which was introduced in 2017 and implemented for the Election in 2018. The procedure will start with a call for experts, before screening and evaluation later in the year, and endorsement of a shortlist in early 2021.

Dr Zhao from China requested more information about the election procedure for the Specialist Commission. Dr Kugita will share information after the meeting ([see attachment](#)).

- 32nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for AFEO (TBC)

Dr Sorraivis Thaneto, Delegate of Thailand, confirmed that Thailand will host the 32nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania. It is likely to be organised in September/October 2021, but details of dates and venue will be confirmed in May 2021 during the 88th OIE General Session.

3. COVID-19 and OIE's activities to be considered in the Region

Dr Lesa Thompson, Regional Project Officer at RRAP, presented the OIE's global and regional activities on COVID-19, with updates on the disease from the animal health perspective. Recent guidance documents and statements were highlighted (with links included in the presentation).

Dr Mark Schipp, President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Australia informed attendees that on 29th of April, Dr Eloit and he co-signed a letter which was sent to all Delegates requesting they consider steps that can be taken within their country to reduce the zoonotic risks of terrestrial wild animal wet markets. So far, there has been limited response and Dr Schipp requested feedback on any action taken.

Members are encouraged to share their experiences relating to VS collaborations and Member activities during the COVID-19 pandemic. Some Members (Indonesia, Iran, Nepal) shared details of activities between VS and the human health sector, including laboratory surveillance of SARS-CoV-2 in human and animal samples. Details of such activities will be added to the regional website as examples for other Members.

Dr Baoxu Huang, Delegate from China, shared some updates on COVID-19. As it is not believed that COVID-19 originated from food animals, the opinion was that there should be no restrictions on the trade of food animals. China has tested more than 10,000 samples collected from mid-2019 to December 2019 from various animal species, including livestock, cats and dogs; all results were negative to SARS-CoV-2. There was no evidence found of clinical disease in pigs, poultry, cattle and sheep. Animal experiments showed that livestock and poultry do not appear to be susceptible to SARS-CoV-2. Molecular research also suggests that SARS-CoV-2 didn't originate from domestic animals; gene homology with coronavirus (CoV) in these species is low. There was high gene homology of SARS-CoV-2 with bat CoV and pangolin CoV, but there were also significant differences. Although the source can't be confirmed at this stage, China has banned consumption of wild animals and significantly tightened control of trade in wildlife.

Ali Safer Maken, newly appointed CVO of Iran, shared that he is a member of the national COVID-19 management centre which is headed by the President of Iran. The human and animal health authorities have coordinated surveillance on COVID-19 including testing samples from animals; they have also developed several guidelines in the country. Iran has tested hundreds of samples from dogs and cats – all were negative for SARS-CoV-2.

4. African horse sickness (AHS) update – activities of OIE in the region

- Update from the OIE

Dr Laure Weber-Vintzel, Deputy Sub-Regional Representative of OIE Sub-Regional Representation for South East Asia presented on the OIE's activities in response to the outbreak of AHS in Thailand and the risk it poses to members in the region. Upon detection of the disease, the first priority was awareness/communication and a dedicated page was developed on the OIE regional website to share guidelines. A series of webinars on AHS has been successfully conducted to provide technical support in the region, involving more than 20 experts from around the world. She also outlined key areas that the OIE could support Members in the Region including developing communication materials, diagnostics (there is an OIE Network of AHS Reference Centres) and in-country missions.

Dr Sorravis Thaneto, Delegate of Thailand, updated the Regional Commission about AHS in Thailand, with updates on activities undertaken for the outbreak this year. Within two months of the outbreak, following implementation of control measures including vaccination, the number of cases has reduced; no new cases have been reported since the last week of May 2020. Thailand has requested the OIE to set up a regional vaccine bank for use by members to control AHS.

5. African swine fever – activities of OIE in the region

- Updates on the Standing Group of Experts on ASF

Dr Caitlin Holley, Regional Project Coordinator from RRAP, presented updates on ASF situation in Asia Pacific Region and activities of OIE in response to the disease. In the region, 13 countries have reported ASF, with the most recent outbreaks in Papua New Guinea and a few North Eastern States in India. She highlighted the role that the Standing Group of Experts have played in providing expertise and recommendations for members to tackle ASF.

Thailand shared its status and actions on ASF. The disease has been added to the national agenda and budget has now been allocated until 2021. Public-private-partnership (PPP) has been implemented and active surveillance includes strengthening border control with neighbouring countries (Laos, Myanmar and Cambodia). So far, no disease has been detected.

6. Closing of meeting

In conclusion, Dr Kugita thanked all participants and assured that for those queries that could not be answered would be followed up and information will be shared after the meeting. All presentations will be uploaded to the OIE regional website after getting approval from the presenters.

The meeting officially ended at 1.45 pm (Tokyo time).