



WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH

Protecting animals, preserving our future

32nd Conference of the
OIE Regional Commission for
Asia, the Far East and Oceania,
by videoconference, 15 - 16 September 2021

FINAL REPORT

Introduction

Following the kind offer of the Government of Thailand during the 31st Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania held in Japan in September 2019, the 32nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania was initially planned to take place in Thailand in September 2021. However, due to the persistence of the sensitive sanitary situation linked to the COVID-19 pandemic crisis as well as according to the OIE Council decision, following its extraordinary meeting held in June 2020, to adapt planned Regional Conferences into a virtual format, it was decided to also keep this Conference virtual. Thus, the 32nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania was held on 15 and 16 September 2021, at 7:00 a.m. (Paris time), by videoconference (via Zoom).

A total of 164 participants, comprising OIE Delegates and/or participants of 30 Members of the Region and senior officers from 6 regional and international organisations, attended the Conference.

Members of the Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania attending the Conference: Australia, Bangladesh, Bhutan, Brunei, Cambodia, China (People's Rep. of), Chinese Taipei, Fiji, India, Indonesia, Iran, Iraq, Japan, Korea (Rep. of), Laos, Malaysia, Maldives, Mongolia, Myanmar, Nepal, New Caledonia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea, Philippines, Russia, Singapore, Sri Lanka, Thailand, Vanuatu, and Vietnam.

International/regional organisations: EC¹, FAO², NACA³, SPC⁴, WAP⁵, and WHO-WPRO⁶.

Dr Baoxu Huang, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania and Delegate of China (People's Republic of), Dr Hugo Idoyaga Benítez, President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates and Delegate of Paraguay, Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General, Dr Jean Philippe Dop, OIE Deputy Director General "Institutional Affairs and Regional Activities", Dr François Caya, OIE Chief of Staff, Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, Dr Ronello Abila, OIE Sub-Regional Representative for South-East Asia, Dr Montserrat Arroyo Kuribreña, Head of the OIE Regional Activities Department also participated in the Conference. Additionally, relevant key experts and OIE technical and administrative staff also participated in this important event for the Asia, Far East and Oceania region.

¹ EC: European Commission

² FAO: Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

³ NACA: Network of Aquaculture Centres in Asia-Pacific

⁴ SPC: Secretariat of the Pacific Community

⁵ WAP: World Animal Protection

⁶ WHO: World Health Organization – Western Pacific Regional Office (WPRO)

SESSION 1: OPENING CEREMONY

Welcome remarks

The following authorities gave a welcome address:

- Dr Baoxu Huang, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania and OIE Delegate of PR China
- Dr Hugo Federico Idoyaga Benítez, President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates and OIE Delegate of Paraguay;
- Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General;
- Mr Chalermchai Sri-on, Minister of Agriculture and Cooperatives of Thailand, who kindly sent a pre-recorded message.

KEYNOTE SPEECH: Challenges for the implementation of the 7th OIE Strategic Plan in the post-pandemic world of COVID-19

Dr Monique Eloit, OIE Director General, informed participants about the adaptations to the OIE Seventh Strategic Plan to address the current and potential new challenges faced worldwide. She also explained how the OIE saw the planning and implementation of its activities for the coming five years and emphasised the following aspects:

- The OIE Seventh Strategic Plan differs significantly from the previous ones because its development process was more inclusive, involving Members, partners and OIE staff. It also promotes an Organisation that is more committed to explicitly stated values and guiding principles but, above all, rather than just updating the Sixth Strategic Plan, the Seventh Strategic Plan aims to create fresh momentum to continue building an Organisation ready to meet current and future challenges.
- As the new plan is less technical than previous ones, it is also more accessible to ministers, decision-makers, and a wide range of partners, including resources partners. This is in line with the OIE's active participation in political forums, such as the G7, the G20 and other high-level ministerial meetings.
- The Strategic Plan has five main objectives: (1) scientific expertise; (2) transformation towards a digital model, with a data management strategy; (3) responding to the needs of Members; (4) fostering close collaboration with partners; and (5) ensuring efficiency and agility thanks to the application of modern processes and tools.
- The challenge posed by the COVID-19 pandemic has once again highlighted the need for more scientific expertise, in particular for assessing risks at the human/animal/environment interface, as well as the importance of strengthening existing agreements or establishing new ones with key partners to be able to work actively and in coordination for the common good.
- The need to exchange more data, including more sophisticated data, with as many partners as possible, as well as the new ways of working (namely teleworking and virtual meetings), reinforce the relevance of the OIE's commitment to a digital transformation of the Organisation.
- The prioritisation of the 5 strategic objectives will be different from what we thought 18 months ago. Undoubtedly the digital transformation is the most urgent one. The success of the implementation of 4 other objectives is strongly dependent on our ability to accelerate this transformation.
- At the same time, other objectives should also be addressed, including the following: expanding and strengthening wildlife expertise, ensuring the relevance of OIE programmes for its Members based on the current context, for which the OIE Training Platform is a crucial tool; and adjusting the partnership strategy, including revitalising some of the existing partnership agreements, in particular with organisations involved in wildlife or environmental issues. The partnership with WHO must also be strengthened, which is key to future discussions on the global governance of any future health crises. Also, the OIE's internal processes must be modernised in particular for the daily administrative and budgetary management.

- There will be budgetary constraints that may impose choices in priorities especially considering that the number of staff remains the same and the level of work has increased significantly due to the new needs and priorities as well as the need to ensure regular OIE activities are delivered in order to provide our Members with the expected services.
- The implementation of all these activities in response to the new challenges will have a major impact, which Members must understand and accept, namely: OIE Headquarters staff will not be able to dedicate the same amount of time to “business as usual”, as staff will need to focus on all the changes that must be undertaken, and traditional activities are likely to be reduced in order to concentrate temporarily on new areas, such as: preparedness and emergencies, as well as data management.

SESSION 2: TECHNICAL TOPICS

Summary of the disease situation in the Region and the new OIE WAHIS system

Dr Paula Cáceres, Head of the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department started her presentation by providing participants with an update on the animal health situation in the region, mainly covering African Swine Fever, Foot and Mouth Disease, Avian influenza, and Lumpy Skin Disease.

Dr Peter Melens, Deputy Head of the OIE World Animal Health Information and Analysis Department, then gave a presentation on the new OIE-WAHIS platform, including an overview of the selected OIE-WAHIS functionalities.

Following the presentation, a plenary interactive exercise was facilitated by Dr Kinzang Dukpa, Regional Project Coordinator at the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, after which the Regional Commission concluded that:

- Members’ transparency and timely reporting of animal diseases are critical for effective control and potential eradication of animal diseases in the region.
- Members should ensure continuous surveillance and monitoring of animal diseases to take timely action to control further spread of diseases.
- Members should make full use of the new OIE-WAHIS platform as it has several user-friendly features including advanced analytical and mapping tools that allows better visualization of the spatio-temporal disease data and such information can be valuable in risk assessment for animal disease control and animal trade.
- The OIE will continue to provide training and technical support to the Members in the region on the use of the new system in consideration of the several issues faced by Members in using the new OIE-WAHIS system,
- The OIE will need to provide training and support tools to the Focal Points (aquatic animals) to enhance reporting of aquatic animal diseases in the region to the OIE.

A: ASF and other emerging TADs

Global strategy and initiatives

Dr Alexandre Fediaevsky, GF-TADs Regional Coordinator from the GF-TADs Global Secretariat, provided information on the collaboration at global and regional level for priority TADs and other new and emerging TADs through the FAO/OIE Global Framework for the Progressive Control of Transboundary Animal Diseases (GF-TADs). He informed the participants about the work done in response to the 3rd external evaluation of GF-TADs to develop the GF-TADs strategy 2021-2025. The global strategy will have 3 main objectives:

- Establish regional strategies to control/eradicate /prevent TADs
- Develop capacities considering multisectoral and synergistic approach
- Improve sustainability of strategies through multisectoral partnerships

The global strategy will be launched at the 12th Global Steering Committee meeting for GF-TADs on 2 November 2021.

Regional GF-TADs Strategy and operation

Dr Caitlin Holley, Regional Project Coordinator at the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, presented the current structure and governance mechanisms for the Regional GF-TADs for Asia and the Pacific, with strong emphasis on input and representation from each of the 4 subregions: East Asia, South East Asia, South Asia, and the Pacific.

There are 5 priority transboundary animal diseases recognised by the region which are: Foot and mouth disease, Avian influenza, high impact swine diseases, peste des petite ruminants, and rabies with each subregion choosing their own specific priority diseases.

There is also a focus on regional coordination on emerging diseases and emergency preparedness within the regional GF-TADs priorities. Lumpy skin disease has been spreading through Asia in recent years and has been recognised as an important emerging disease to be addressed through regional GF-TADs.

With the development of the global GF-TADs strategy 2021-2025, an updated regional GF-TADs strategy is also under development with input from the Regional Steering Committee for GF-TADs for Asia and the Pacific.

Responding to and preparing for TADs

Dr Kachen Wongsathapornchai, FAO Regional Manager for Asia and the Pacific, presented the main GF-TADs activities that have been undertaken in the region over the past 2 years. While there have been many constraints and changes to work modality with the COVID-19 pandemic, the need for regional coordination and information sharing on transboundary animal diseases has continued. There has also been collaboration and engagement with partners and stakeholders working in different sectors such as private industry, wildlife, environment, NGOs, and academia to produce communication materials, recommendations, guidelines, and training to ensure a relevant and holistic approach for tackling transboundary animal diseases.

These presentations were followed by an interactive exercise that allowed the following conclusions by the Regional Commission:

- Regional coordination and collaboration are viewed as highly important for controlling transboundary animal diseases. Partners from private industry, wildlife and environment, other government agencies and NGOs should be consulted in development of disease control strategies and included in regional discussions about TADs.
- A regional collaborative framework covering potential emerging animal diseases could be beneficial to strengthen regional coordination and improve disease control for future disease threats.
- Regional members are interested to be more engaged in GF-TADs coordination.

B: Aquatic Animal Health

Asia-Pacific Aquaculture: Impacts of Transboundary Diseases

Dr Eduardo Leano, Senior Programme Officer from the Aquatic Animal Health Programme from NACA informed participants about the importance of aquaculture in the Asia, Far East and Oceania region and the challenges that need to be overcome and the major Transboundary Aquatic Animal Diseases (TAADs) that have swept the region over the past 30 years which have caused massive economic (about 6 billion USD annually) and social losses. A Collaborative approach is necessary for effective aquatic animal health management, disease surveillance programme, and for effective emergency preparedness and response system.

Toward a future of improved aquatic animal health worldwide: OIE activities of importance to the region

Dr Ingo Ernst, President of the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission, presented the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Strategy 2021-2025 launched in May 2021. This Strategy will improve aquatic animal health and welfare worldwide, contributing to sustainable economic growth, poverty alleviation and food security, thereby supporting the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). He introduced the four objectives been addressed in the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Strategy which are Standards, Capacity building, Resilience and Leadership. Dr Ernst also emphasised the activities proposed to achieve objectives of Capacity building and Resilience which will be discussed with OIE Delegates for identifying the activity Members think that would make the greatest regional impact.

Updates on Regional Collaboration Framework on Aquatic Animal Health in Asia and the Pacific

Dr Jing Wang, Regional Veterinary Officer at the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific gave a presentation to update on the Regional Collaboration Framework on Aquatic Animal Health in Asia and the Pacific (collaboration framework). The main objectives of the collaboration are 1) To strengthen collaboration among and between OIE Reference Centres and the OIE Members in the region; and 2) To Share and exchange information on test validation, reference materials and positive samples.

Activities and flagship project conducted under the collaboration framework since 2019 including: collection and evaluation of existing guidelines and awareness materials on aquaculture biosecurity for small-scale farms in the Asia-Pacific Region; collection and evaluation of existing test methods for acute hepatopancreatic necrosis disease (AHPND) and Regional collaboration to respond to emerging diseases of aquatic animals

Following the plenary consultations during the interactive exercise regarding this topic, the following conclusion from the Regional Commission were noted:

- OIE Focal Point for Aquatic Animals are the most interested person to receive information on progress to implement OIE aquatic initiatives
- Participants would be interested in hearing more from OIE on: a) opportunities to contribute to specific activities (e.g. working groups, planning workshops); b) overall progress to implement the strategy; c) final reports and outputs; d) guidance to use project outcomes in respective Members; and e) summaries or case studies of specific activities.
- Updates posted on the OIE website, webinar and Focal Point seminars been identified as the best ways to share information on OIE aquatic initiatives with interested personnel.
- Out of the eight activities proposed under objective two (Capacity building), development of a disease identification guide for mobile devices is suggested as the activity that Members think would make the greatest regional impact.
- Provide support for early response at national level is identified as the priority for objective three (Resilience).

C: Wildlife Health

OIE Wildlife Health Strategy

Dr Sophie Muset, Ebola Project Lead Programme and Technical Coordinator at the OIE Preparedness and Resilience Department, informed participants about the importance of wildlife health management and the implementation of the OIE Wildlife Health Framework (WHF).

Wildlife surveillance and reporting

Dr Rupert Woods from the OIE Wildlife Working Group, informed participants about wildlife surveillance and reporting using Australia's wildlife health surveillance framework as an example of how this can be achieved.

Networking of wildlife experts

Dr Lesa Thompson, Regional Project Officer at the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, highlighted that wildlife health networking has many benefits. She gave an overview of the current situation in the region.

Following the interactive exercises proposed to participants, the Regional Commission concluded that:

Of the six WHF objectives, (i) promotion of multisectoral coordination and collaboration, (ii) strengthening capacity in wildlife health management and (iii) improving quality data collection, reporting, analysis, and use are the highest priorities for Members to implement.

While Veterinary Services are already working with many stakeholders in wildlife health, there remain challenges (similar to other sectors – such as lack of coordination, resources and political will). It was concluded that One Health activities can be strengthened by communication, coordination and sustained multisectoral engagement.

Networking is a key method of improving awareness and sharing information and technical expertise on wildlife health across the region. The OIE is committed to supporting its Members to develop a solid and efficient network supporting wildlife health for the region.

D: Veterinary workforce development

Workforce assessment, planning, and development

Dr David Sherman, Programme Coordinator at the OIE Capacity-Building Department gave a brief overview regarding the importance of veterinary workforce assessment, planning and development.

Capacity building tools to support Veterinary services: the PVS Pathway and the Training Platform

Dr Barbara Alessandrini, Head of the OIE Capacity-Building Department, gave an overview of OIE support for Veterinary Services capacity building, including the OIE Platform for the Training of the Veterinary Services and Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS). The Training Platform is a landmark feature which will provide online learning opportunities for 16 competency packages. The OIE is currently developing new tools to assist Members in workforce assessment and planning and in creating an enabling environment for effective integration of VPPs into the veterinary workforce.

Regional activities and opportunities for engagement

Dr Maho Urabe, Regional Veterinary Officer at the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, gave a presentation to briefly introduce regional activities related to veterinary workforce development and opportunities for Members to engage in OIE veterinary workforce development activities.

These presentations were followed by experience sharing by representatives of Members (Bhutan, New Zealand, Thailand, and Singapore) on workforce related topics. The session was facilitated by Ms Sonia Fèvre, Programme Manager from the Capacity Building Department. The following conclusions were noted:

- Recent crisis such as Covid-19 and ASF highlighted the need for more veterinary workforce and training. Having competent workforce, sufficient in number, is critically important.
- Members are in different stages of advancement for workforce development, requiring various approaches and potential support from the OIE.
- Public-Private Partnerships play an important role in effective workforce development.
- Members are interested in engaging in workforce development activities with support of the OIE and investing in human resources. Awareness-raising activities (such as regional workshop and events) as well as PVS Pathway activities will both be important ways for Members and non-Members to engage in this area.

Session 3: Regional Commission internal discussion and closing

The last session of the Conference was dedicated to Regional Commission internal matters. The Session was chaired by Dr Baoxu Huang, President of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania and OIE Delegate of PR China.

Several internal topics of relevance to the Regional Commission were discussed and some main points highlighted/concluded as follows:

Regional Work Plan Framework

As secretariat and on behalf of the Bureau of the Regional Commission, Dr Hirofumi Kugita, OIE Regional Representative for Asia and the Pacific, shared the background and work done so far to bring out the 3rd Regional Work Plan Framework. The Regional Commission acknowledged the significance of the document and agreed to establish an *ad hoc* group to further modify the document and finalise it for adoption by 17 December 2021 with the support of the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific as secretariat. The *ad hoc* group is initiated by New Zealand and Australia and includes Singapore, Japan, Myanmar, and India.

Regional Coordination Procedure

Dr Okita, Vice-president of the Regional Commission and Delegate of Japan reviewed how regional coordination procedure especially on standard setting process has been conducted. He exhorted Delegates to participate in a more active way in the standard setting process. Finally, he commented the possibility to explore a better platform to develop a common position of the Region.

Regional Animal Welfare Strategy (RAWS)

Dr Ye Tun Win, Secretary General of the OIE Regional Commission and Delegate of Myanmar, presented the background and activities related to RAWS. Follow-up activities were proposed, which included organising a new RAWS advisory group, reviewing the RAWS and the RAWS Action Plan. India expressed their willingness to join the new RAWS advisory group.

OIE communication tools

Dr Asako Endo, Regional Veterinary Officer at the Regional Representation for Asia and the Pacific, presented the current available OIE communication tools including the regional website. A short interactive session was carried out to get feedback from Members regarding the available OIE communication tools. Very interesting feedback was received. RRAP will address the raised comments with the help of the Communication Unit at the OIE Headquarters to ensure better communication with Members.

Venue for the 33rd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission in 2023

India, Indonesia, and Myanmar expressed their willing to host 33rd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania. A list of previous venues was presented to support the Regional Commission taking a decision regarding the venue of the next Regional Conference, keeping in mind the importance to give the opportunity to Members proposing to receive a Conference for the first time. The three Members were invited to discuss among them to decide who will host the next Conference, knowing that one Member can host the 33rd Conference and eventually other can host the 34th Conference. The final decision will be communicated/discussed during the meeting of the Regional Commission during the General Session.

Closing ceremony

Dr Monique Eloit started by thanking Thailand for hosting (virtually) the 32nd Conference of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania. She then thanked the participants for the two days of interactive and productive discussions. She highlighted that the active participation and reactions of Members during the two days interactive activities shown that topics in the agenda were of relevance to the region and that presentations were of interest to participants which means that the Conference was a success. She underlined that all the comments and inputs of participants in the chat box are of great importance and very useful for the OIE to regularly assess if the programmes and their related activities are well aligned with Member's needs. She then thanked all the speakers for the clear and comprehensive presentations aiming at updating Members regarding OIE activities. She also made special mention to the non OIE Members that attended the two days Conference and hoped that they have enjoyed it. She also took the opportunity to remind those non OIE Members that if they need additional information, they are always welcome and the OIE is ready to respond. She concluded by hoping to meet again soon with all the Members as it is thanks to this kind of interaction that we can all advance and make sure that the OIE provides the most appropriate support to its Members.

Finally, the President of the OIE Regional Commission for Asia, the Far East and Oceania, Dr Baoxu Huang, declared the meeting officially closed wishing everybody good continuation in their activities.