STANDARD SETTING PROCESS OF THE WORLD ORGANISATION FOR ANIMAL HEALTH (OIE)

A Handbook for Guidance of Participation of African Countries
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FOREWORD

This handbook was initiated under the PANSPSO project of AU-IBAR with the main aim of providing an easy to read guidance to OIE Delegates of African countries on the OIE and to help them to better understand the OIE and thereby enhancing their participation in the activities and standard setting procedures of the OIE.

Much of the information contained in this Handbook is available in more detail on the OIE website and in several other publication of the OIE. The main emphasis of the book is to introduce Delegates to the proud history of the OIE, its achievements, its relationship with other organisations and above all the important process of setting, adoption and implementation of OIE standards for the trade in animals and animal products.

Delegates are given guidance on how to best participate in the standard setting process and how to best participate in the activities of the OIE and especially how to prepare and participate in the World Assembly of Delegates held in Paris, France at OIE Headquarters in May of each year.

The important role played by AU-IBAR to assist Member Countries to fulfil their role as Delegates and to achieve the establishment of a common position for Africa when the adoption of new or amended standards of the OIE is also described.

It is trusted that the Handbook will assist African Member Countries to become better informed Delegates and help them to participate fully and with better understanding in the many activities of the OIE.

Finally, I would like to sincerely thank Dr Gideon Bruckner, consultant for AU-IBAR and author of this handbook, for his work.

Prof. Ahmed El-Sawalhy
Director of AU-IBAR
ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>AHS</td>
<td>African horse sickness</td>
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<td>AAHSC</td>
<td>Aquatic Animal Health Commission</td>
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<td>AU-IBAR</td>
<td>African Union Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources</td>
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<td>BSC</td>
<td>Biological Standards Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>BSE</td>
<td>Bovine spongiform encephalopathy</td>
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<tr>
<td>CBPP</td>
<td>Contagious bovine pleuropneumonia</td>
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<tr>
<td>CMC-AH</td>
<td>Crisis Management Centre – Animal health</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSF</td>
<td>classical swine fever</td>
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<tr>
<td>CVOs</td>
<td>Chief Veterinary Officer</td>
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<tr>
<td>DSB</td>
<td>Dispute Settlement Body</td>
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<tr>
<td>ECOWAS</td>
<td>Economic Community of the West African States</td>
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<td>EU</td>
<td>European Union</td>
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<tr>
<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations</td>
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<tr>
<td>FMD</td>
<td>Foot and Mouth disease</td>
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<tr>
<td>GF-TADs</td>
<td>Global Framework for the progressive control of Transboundary Animal Diseases</td>
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<tr>
<td>HPAI</td>
<td>Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza</td>
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<tr>
<td>GLEWS</td>
<td>Global Early Warning System</td>
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<tr>
<td>MERS –CoV</td>
<td>Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus outbreak</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OFFLU</td>
<td>OIE/FAO Influenza Laboratories Network</td>
</tr>
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<td>OIE</td>
<td>World Organisation for Animal Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>OIE PVS Tool</td>
<td>OIE Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PANSPO</td>
<td>Participation of African Nations in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard Setting Organizations Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>PPR</td>
<td>Peste Des Petits Ruminants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern African Development Community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SCAD</td>
<td>Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases</td>
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<tr>
<td>SPS</td>
<td>Sanitary and Phytosanitary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TAHSC</td>
<td>Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VPH</td>
<td>Veterinary Public Health</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WAHID</td>
<td>World Animal Health Information Database</td>
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<tr>
<td>WAHIS</td>
<td>World Animal Health Information System</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>WHO</td>
<td>World Health Organization</td>
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<td>WTO</td>
<td>World Trade Organization</td>
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1 DESCRIPTION OF THE ORGANISATION

1.1 History of the OIE

In 1920, rinderpest occurred unexpectedly in Belgium, as a result of zebus, originating from India and destined for Brazil, transiting via the port of Antwerp. The potential disastrous effect this disease could have on Europe, gave rise to the urgent need to establish a harmonised and coordinated intergovernmental approach to deal with this disaster and potential similar disasters of global animal disease spread – not only in Europe but also in the rest of the world. Despite the inevitable slowness of the negotiations undertaken through diplomatic channels, twenty-eight States obtained an “international agreement” on 25 January 1924. The ratification of this 1924 Agreement creating the Office International des Epizooties (OIE) based in Paris, France reflects a desire clearly expressed by the Secretary General of the League of Nations. By the beginning of 1927, the Agreement of 1924 had already been ratified by twenty-four States, countries or dominions, and the International Committee of the Office held its first General Assembly on 8 March 1927. Twenty-six Delegates were present. The Assembly chose Inspector General De Roo, Delegate of Belgium, as President and Prof. Leclainche was appointed as first Director of the Office. The Assembly decided to publish a Bulletin. In 1939 the then Director General, Dr Leclainche, purchased the building at 12, rue de Prony in the seventeenth arrondissement of Paris, which the Office has occupied ever since. The United Nations, which replaced the League of Nations in 1945, established two specialist Agencies: the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in 1946 and the World Health Organization (WHO) in 1948. Their aims partially covered those of the OIE. The establishment of these two Agencies called the existence of the OIE into question and the possibility of simply dissolving the OIE was envisaged in 1946, and again in 1951. Thanks to the opposition of numerous OIE Member Countries and Delegates, the functions of the Office were kept alive. The OIE has since its founding in 1924, remained an independent intergovernmental organisation and has signed cooperative agreements with more than 58 International, industry related and non-governmental organisations including the FAO.
and WHO. In 2003, the International Office of Epizootics became the World Organisation for Animal Health, but kept its historical acronym, OIE. From the initial 28 Member Countries in 1924 the OIE has grown to a total of 178 Member Countries by the end of 2012. The main focus of the OIE when it was founded in 1924 was to provide international cooperation and coordination against the spread of animal diseases.

In 1994, the Agreements that led to the creation of the World Trade Organization (WTO) included specific measures on the management of sanitary and phytosanitary problems relating to the risks posed by trade in animals and animal products. The standards, guidelines and recommendations issued by the OIE are recognized by the OIE as international standards to be used to facilitate trade in animals and animal products. The WTO’s choice of the OIE stems mainly from the fact that the decisions of the OIE are exclusively science-based.

Now, nearly ninety years later, the core mandate of the organisation has been modified to become “To improve the health and the welfare of animals all over the world regardless of the cultural practices or the economic situations in member countries” as it is recognized that the control of the spread of animal diseases is best achieved by ensuring the health of animals wherever they are. The improvement of animal health has net positive consequences for human health (including for zoonotic disease-control, food security and food safety) and net benefits for economic development, poverty alleviation and food production especially in rural populations. International cooperation and coordination of actions based on the scientific assessment of risks to animal and public health and the scientific evaluation of animal welfare remain the principal means of achieving these benefits.

I.2 The mandate, missions and strategic objectives of the OIE
The overall mandate of the OIE is to improve animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare world-wide. This prevention of spread of animal diseases; prevention and control of animal diseases transmissible to humans (zoonosis); reduction of risks from infectious diseases at the animals-humans-ecosystems interface; improved animal production food safety measures; and improvement of animal welfare.

Within this overall mandate, the following specific missions form part of the OIE’s competence:
• To ensure transparency in the global animal disease situation, including zoonoses;
• To collect, analyse and disseminate relevant scientific information, especially on disease control methods and animal welfare;
• To provide expertise in the control of animal diseases including zoonoses, notably those at the animal-human-ecosystems interface taking into account the “One Health” concept;
• To ensure safety of world trade in animals and animal products by preparing, adopting and promoting the implementation of relevant health standards for such trade, as foreseen in the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the “SPS Agreement”); 
• To improve the safety of food of animal origin from hazards originating in animal production;
• To establish standards and guidelines for animal welfare through a science-based approach and promoting their application;
• To improve the legal framework, competency and resources of national Veterinary Services; and particularly their Global Public Good components;
• To address animal health issues related to poverty alleviation and the assurance of food security;
• To provide expertise to Members in understanding and managing the effects of environmental and climate changes on animal health and welfare;
• To influence policy design, education, research and governance on worldwide issues concerning animal health, veterinary public health and animal welfare.

The OIE manages its mandate and specific missions through a well-structured strategic plan that is revised and updated every 5 years. The strategic objectives identified within the current Strategic Plan for the period 2011 to 2016, commits the OIE to:
• Communicate, timely and accurate animal disease information, including information on zoonoses, by making the best use of scientific data modelling, modern information technologies, and non-official information and tracking systems.
• Develop scientifically-based standards and guidelines for the international community on all matters concerning animal and veterinary public health, animal welfare, diagnosis and control of diseases, assessment and relevant recognition of Members animal health status, sanitary safety in animal production and in international trade, and encourage the use of these standards and guidelines.
• Provide scientifically-based recommendations on measures for the
prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases including zoonoses, taking into account the economic, social and environmental impacts of such measures.

• Ensure the scientific excellence and timeliness of information and advice available to national Veterinary Services and other interested parties in all areas covered by the Organisation’s mandate.

• Strengthen the capacity of Members’ Veterinary Services to achieve the improvement of animal and veterinary public health and animal welfare while improving their ability to participate in the development of international standards and guidelines on these matters; and strengthen their ability to apply these standards and guidelines.

• Strengthen OIE’s involvement in policy design and governance related to decision making in animal and veterinary public health and animal welfare including capacity building, education, policy research, cost/benefit analysis, effective communication, and the “mediation” of potential disputes.

1.3 The organisational structure of the OIE

1.3.1 The Worldwide structure of the OIE

The OIE is a worldwide organisation with the World Assembly of Delegates as the highest authority and decision-making body chaired by a Delegate from a Member Country elected as President for a term of 3 years. The World Assembly of Delegates is represented in the interim period between meetings of the World Assembly in May of each year, by the OIE Council consisting of the President, the Past President and six elected Delegates. The OIE truly represents a worldwide organisation with its headquarters in Paris managed by the Director General of the OIE who is elected by the World Assembly of Delegates for a period of 5 years but is liable for re-election. The current Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat, assumed office in January 2001 and has since been elected already twice for this position.

Within each of the 5 Regions of the OIE (Africa, Americas, Europe, Asia and the Pacific and the Middle East), there is also an elected Regional Commission consisting of OIE Delegates from that particular Region. The Regional Commission consists of a President, 2 Vice Presidents and a Secretary General elected by the World Assembly for a period of 3 years. Each Regional Commission meets every year in May during the World Assembly of Delegates and also host a Conference every two years in one of the countries of the Region. These Conferences are devoted to technical items and to regional cooperation in the control of animal diseases. Regional programs may be developed to reinforce surveillance and control of major animal diseases, especially for regions where
the OIE maintains a Regional or Sub-Regional Representation. The Regional Commissions work closely with these Representations. Regional Commissions report on their activities and submit recommendations to the World Assembly of Delegates.

**Figure 1:** The Worldwide structure of the OIE

**Figure 2:** Member Country distribution of OIE (178 members in 2013)
1.3.2 The structure of the OIE Headquarters in Paris, France

The Headquarters are located in Paris. The World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) is placed under the authority of the Director General of the OIE, appointed every 5 years by secret ballot by vote of the World Assembly of Delegates. Unlike its sister organisations such as the FAO and WHO, the personnel component of the total OIE staff is relatively small (currently about 150 staff members) allowing for a non-bureaucratic management style and a quick and expedited decision-making process. The OIE conducts its management functions in three official languages: French, Spanish and English.

The Headquarters implement and coordinate activities such as disease information, technical cooperation and scientific activities, which the World Assembly of Delegates has decided upon. The linkage between the Director General and the Delegates of the OIE is though the elected OIE Council. The Council is composed of the President of the World Assembly of Delegates, the Vice-President, the Past President and six Delegates representing all the regions, all elected (with the exception of the former President) for a three-year term. The Council represents the Assembly during the interval between General Assembly meetings.

The Council meets at least twice a year in Paris to examine technical and administrative matters and, in particular, the working program and the proposed budget to be presented to the Assembly.

Furthermore, the Headquarters provides the secretariat for the annual General Assembly, meetings of the Council and the Commissions as well as technical meetings organised by the OIE. Assistance is also given by the Headquarters to the secretariat of regional and specialised conferences. At least 2 or 3 International Conferences are organised annually by the OIE — either as an exclusive OIE event or in collaboration with its international partners such as the FAO, WHO and EU as well as Regional and Industry Organisations. Since 1990 it also has a Documentation Centre of a great scientific value.

The functional responsibilities within the OIE Headquarters are reflected in figure 2 below. The Director General is supported by 2 Deputy Director Generals each with the relevant Departments under their responsibility: a Deputy Director General (Administration, Management, Human Resources and Regional Actions) and a Deputy Director General (Animal health, Veterinary Public Health and International Standards.
### 1.3.3 Regional sub-regional Offices of the OIE

The headquarters of the OIE is further complimented and supported by offices for Regional Representatives and sub-regional Representatives of the OIE in Africa, Americas, Asia and the Pacific, Europe and the Middle East. The goal of these Representations is to provide regionally adapted services to OIE Members so that they may strengthen the surveillance and control of animal diseases in the region. The Regional Representatives are an extended arm of the OIE Headquarters in Paris to promote the interests of the OIE on a Regional level and to assist OIE Member Countries in the application of OIE standards and recommendations for disease control.

The 5 OIE Regional Representative offices are situated in Bamako, Mali (Africa); Buenos Aires, Argentina (Americas); Tokyo, Japan (Asia and the Pacific); Sofia, Bulgaria (Europe) and Beirut, Lebanon (Middle East). The sub Regional Representative Offices of the 5 Regions are situated in Gaborone, Nairobi and Tunis (Africa); Panama (Americas); Brussels and Moscow (Europe) and Bangkok, Thailand (Asia and the Pacific). The website of the OIE Regional Representative for Africa is kept up to date on a daily basis and contains valuable information for Delegates. The website can be accessed at [http://www.rr-africa.oie.int/en/en_index.html](http://www.rr-africa.oie.int/en/en_index.html).
1.3.4 The Departments within the OIE headquarters

1.3.4.1 Scientific and Technical Department

This Department manages a wide spectrum of responsibilities within the OIE headquarters such as matters related to disease control, antimicrobial resistance, registration of diagnostic kits, manage the secretariat for OFFLU (OIE/FAO Influenza Laboratories Network); secretariat for OIE Scientific Conferences, workshops and regional training programs; OIE reference laboratories and collaborating centers; biological weapons convention and bio threat reduction programs. It is also responsible to provide technical assistance and secretarial support to the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Health (Scientific Commission), the Biological Standards Commission and partly the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (Aquatic Commission) and also all the meetings of ad hoc Groups, expert Groups and the Working Group on Wildlife Diseases emanating from the work of the Specialist Commissions. An important task under the responsibility of the Scientific and Technical Department is to assist the Scientific Commission in screening and managing the multiple tasks associated with applications from Member Countries for the recognition, maintenance or re-instatement of official disease status for foot and mouth disease (FMD), contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP), African horse sickness (AHS); classical swine fever (CSF), bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) and peste des petits ruminants (PPR). Technical personnel of the Department also represent the OIE at various meetings, joint initiatives and coordinated actions between the OIE and FAO, WHO and many other international organisations with which the OIE has a cooperative agreement.

1.3.4.3 International Trade Department

This Department manages all international trade related activities of the OIE and is thus also responsible to provide technical and secretarial support to the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) and partly the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission. An important output by the Department is to ensure regular updated publishing of the Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes to ensure that the standards adopted at each World Assembly are available to Member Countries shortly after each General Assembly. The Department is also the focal point for all matters related to food safety and animal welfare resulting in close cooperation, technical and secretarial support to the Working Groups on Animal Welfare and Food Safety who in return are responsible to the Code Commission. Representation of the OIE at meetings of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Committee (SPS Committee) of the WTO as well as meetings of the Codex Alimentarius Commission is done by the technical staff of the Department. Recent responsibilities that were added
to the Department as result of the ever evolving increase in services of the OIE to Member Countries are the improvement in the practical application of standards related to veterinary education and veterinary legislation.

1.3.4.4 Animal Health Information Department

The primary mandate of the Department is to facilitate compliance by Member Countries with an important mission of the OIE namely to ensure transparency in and enhance knowledge of the worldwide animal health situation, including zoonoses. Among the formal obligations of OIE Members is the submission of information on the relevant animal disease situation – including on zoonoses present in their territory - in the most timely and transparent way. To accomplish its mandate in this respect, the Department created and manages the World Animal Health Information System (WAHIS) which is linked with the World Animal Health Information Database (WAHID) interface. The WAHID Interface provides public access to all data in the WAHIS database as soon as they are validated by the OIE. This extensive database managed by the Department is a key element in OIE efforts to improve the transparency, efficiency and speed with which animal health information is disseminated throughout the world.

The World Animal Health Information System is an internet-based computer system that processes data on animal diseases in real-time and then informs the international community. Access to this secure site is only available to authorised users, namely the Delegates of OIE Members and their authorised representatives, who use WAHIS to notify the OIE of relevant animal disease information.

The system consists of two components:

• an early warning system to inform the international community, by means of “alert messages”, of relevant epidemiological events that occurred in OIE Members, and

• a monitoring system to monitor OIE Listed diseases (presence or absence) over time

Whenever an important epidemiological event occurs in a Member Country, the Member is obliged to inform the OIE by sending an Immediate Notification (terrestrial and aquatic animals) which includes the reason for the notification, the name of the disease, the affected species, the geographical area affected, the control measures applied and any laboratory tests carried out or in progress. To improve the scope and efficiency of the OIE’s early warning system, the events of epidemiological significance that Members should immediately notify
to the OIE Headquarters according to the reasons laid down in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code for terrestrial animals and in the Aquatic Animal Health Code for aquatic animals.

Once the information has been received, verified and validated by the OIE, the immediate notifications are published in the OIE’s three official working languages under the heading Alerts and sent to everyone on the OIE-Info Distribution List, an electronic distribution list set up to facilitate and widen the dissemination of animal health information. This list is open not only to the Delegates of Member Countries, the OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centers and international and regional organisations, but also, by subscription, to any institution or individual interested in receiving such information directly.

Six-monthly reports (terrestrial and aquatic animals) provide information on the presence or absence of diseases on the OIE List and the prevention and control measures applied. In 2009, a new feature has been added to differentiate, when relevant, between domestic and wild species using different occurrence codes which has now been further refined into the WAHIS-Wild information system. The two six-monthly reports of a given year are combined as part of the annual report for OIE-listed diseases. In cooperation with the WHO and the FAO, Members are asked to complete the report once a year with information on non OIE-listed diseases.

The Department also participates and contributes to the GLEWS information system. The Global Early Warning System (GLEWS) is a joint system that builds on the added value of combining and coordinating the alert and disease intelligence mechanisms of OIE, FAO and WHO for the international community and stakeholders to assist in the prediction, prevention and control of animal disease threats, including zoonoses, through sharing of information, epidemiological analysis and joint risk assessment. FAO, OIE and WHO have each developed Early Warning Systems that systematically collect, verify, analyse and respond to information from a variety of sources, including unofficial media reports and informal networks. In addition, the OIE and WHO mandates include official notification of disease or infection outbreaks to the international community under conditions determined by their Member Countries.
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African Union - Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources

Figure 4: World Animal Health Information System

1.3.4.5 Regional Activities Department
This is the “youngest” of the Departments in the OIE Headquarters for which the establishment thereof became necessary with the ever increasing expansion of the activities of the OIE on Regional level. The Department works closely with the OIE Regional and sub-Regional representations to ensure that the OIE is clearly visible on Regional level and that Member Countries receives support and get involved in the many actions and initiatives on Regional level. The Department is therefore closely involved in the many conferences organised by the OIE on regional level - either directly from the OIE Headquarters or in close collaboration with the OIE Regional and sub-Regional offices. The Department also renders assistance in collaboration with the OIE Scientific and Technical or International Trade Departments to present training courses for OIE national Focal Points and orientation courses for newly appointed OIE Delegates. There is also close collaboration and liaison between the Department and the OIE Regional Commissions in the 5 OIE Regions through the management of the bi-annual Conferences in each region as well as the annual meeting of the Regional Commissions in May each year during the General Assembly in Paris.
An important function delegated to the Department is the management of OIE expert missions for the OIE PVS Pathway i.e. PVS missions, Gap Analysis missions and missions on veterinary legislation (this is described in more detail in paragraph 2.1 – 2.3).

1.3.4.6 Administration, Logistics and Publications Department

OIE Delegates often perceive the sections in an organisation dealing with human resources, finances, etc. as of “internal importance” only. However, within the OIE Headquarters, much of the visibility and smooth running of the organisation is directly as result of the actions by the different sections within this Department. For Delegates this is the contact point when there is a need to travel to Paris, to attend the General Assembly and to obtain all the travel documentation to prepare for meetings in Paris. The activities of the Department is especially visible during the General Assembly and at OIE Conferences attended by Delegates as all the logistical arrangements and other actions to attend to the needs of Delegates are within the responsibility of the Department.

The Publication Department is responsible for prestige publications of the OIE such as the OIE Bulletin, the Scientific and Technical Review, the OIE Codes and Manuals and many other technical and policy related publications. When attending the General Assembly, the OIE publications can also be purchased at a reduced price.

1.3.5 Funding of the activities of the OIE

In 2012, the OIE’s consolidated budget totalled 20 million Euros and included:
- Member Countries’ statutory contribution
- Member Countries’ voluntary contributions
- subsidies paid into the World Fund by various donors
- other revenue from various sources (publications, fees related to official recognition of disease status, etc.)

The OIE’s resources also include in-kind support provided by Members, such as the provision of buildings free of charge to house some of the regional and sub-regional offices; the provision of technical or administrative staff; the provision by the 277 OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centers worldwide of scientific and educational services free of charge, representing substantial in-kind support for the fulfilment of the OIE’s mandate. In this way, the cost of services provided by the OIE remains modest.
1.3.5.1 Statutory contributions

Member Countries of the OIE are divided into 6 categories for their compulsory statutory contributions. A Member Country is free to choose the category in which it is registered and may also choose a higher contribution category. Member Countries on the United Nations’ list of ‘Least Developed Countries’ benefit from a 50% reduction of their statutory contribution. Part of the Members’ statutory contributions is compulsorily used to finance the Organisation’s Regional Representations operations.

1.3.5.2 Voluntary contributions

Voluntary contributions to help finance the activities of the OIE originate mainly from the World Animal Health and Welfare Fund; funding by countries hosting OIE offices in support of their activities; through specific donations e.g. grants to buy buildings and also through seconding and providing staff to the OIE Headquarters or Regional offices.

1.3.5.3 World Animal Health and Welfare Fund

The OIE World Animal Health and Welfare Fund (the OIE World Fund) was created on May 28, 2004 by Resolution 27 of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates. The rules and operating conditions of the World Fund were further detailed by the OIE Council in 2011 and this new legal basis was approved by the World Assembly of Delegates and formally included into the OIE Basic Texts. The OIE World Fund has been established “for the purpose of projects of international public utility relating to the control of animal diseases, including those affecting humans and the promotion of animal welfare and animal production food safety”.

The main objectives of the activities funded by the OIE World Fund are to:

- improve governance of animal health systems, including Veterinary Services and their compliance with OIE standards on quality via the OIE PVS Pathway, using the OIE PVS Evaluation Tool, PVS Gap Analysis and OIE PVS Pathway follow-up missions;
- modernise existing national veterinary legislation
- develop veterinary education
- develop tools which empower Member Countries to deal with urgent situations regarding the prevention and control of animal diseases (e.g. vaccine banks, communication programs)
- improve the animal health scientific community worldwide through (i) laboratory twinning projects, (ii) twinning projects on veterinary education, and (iii) twinning projects between veterinary statutory bodies.
The resources allocated to the World Fund are devoted as a priority to improving the governance of national animal health systems, especially the Veterinary Services, and strengthening their compliance with OIE standards. It co-finances global, regional and national capacity-building activities, with priority being given to the national Veterinary Services, and in particular Delegates to the OIE and their close collaborators designated as OIE national Focal Points in the field of animal disease notification, wildlife, aquatic animals, veterinary products, animal production food safety, animal welfare, communication and laboratories.

The governments of Australia, Canada, France, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, the United Kingdom, and several public Agencies of the United States of America, Japan, the European Union (through the European Commission) and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation all contributed to date at various stages to the World Fund. The World Fund was thus able to ensure the smooth running of the various OIE programs throughout the world, including: regional workshops and seminars; the strengthening of national veterinary scientific communities in developing countries through the program of twinning with OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centers; the quality of veterinary education worldwide; support for Veterinary Statutory Bodies and modernisation of existing national veterinary legislation.

1.3.6 Elected bodies of the OIE

During each cycle of 3 years, the Delegates of Member Countries, elect by secret ballot during a closed meeting of the World Assembly of Delegates, 5 Commissions to serve the interests of the OIE and thus by implication also the interests of Member Countries. The nominations for elections on these Commissions are done after internal consultation by the OIE Regional Commissions and then decided upon on consultations on a Regional level prior to the General Session when elections will be done. It is thus essential that Regional Commissions should take these elections serious and ensure that suitable candidates are proposed that have a reasonable chance to be elected on the Commissions. Commission members are in effect representing the interests of Delegates as a whole but also that of their region of origin and thus at to promote the interest of his or her region of origin. The elected Commissions are the OIE Council and the 4 Specialist Commissions: Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission or SCAD); the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission or TAHSC); the Biological Standards Commission (Laboratories Commission or BSC) and the Aquatic Animal Health Commission (Aquatic Commission or AAHSC). The Specialist
Commissions consists of a President, two Vice-President and 3 members and the Council of the President, a Vice-president, the immediate past President and 5 members. The immediate past President is not elected but serves as default on the Council for another term of 3 years after expiry of his or her Presidency. Members of Commissions can be re-elected after expiry of the period of 3 years.

The role of the Specialist Commissions of the OIE is to use current scientific information and advances in veterinary epidemiology to evaluate current methods for the prevention and control of animal diseases, to develop and revise the international standards of the OIE and to address scientific and technical issues raised by Members.

The OIE continues to improve the transparency of its standards development process to have the best scientific basis for its standards and to gain support from Member Countries for the implementation of proposed new or amended standards. All reports from OIE Specialist Commissions are published on the OIE public website and incorporate as appendices the accepted reports from relevant OIE Working Groups and ad hoc Groups. The OIE does not solicit comments on these reports other than from Delegates, but will not refuse comments from organisations with an interest in the OIE’s work, as they often represent a very useful source of information.

1.3.6.1 The OIE Council
The Council meets at least twice a year in Paris to examine technical and administrative matters and, in particular, the working program and the proposed budget to be presented to the Assembly. The Council represents the Assembly in the interim period between meetings of the World Assembly.

1.3.6.2 Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases
Founded in 1946, this Commission assists in identifying the most appropriate strategies and measures for disease prevention and control. It also examines Member Country submissions regarding their animal health status for those countries that wish to be included on the OIE list of countries free of certain diseases. The Scientific Commission meets twice a year in February and September and is obliged to report on its activities to the World Assembly in May each year. To ensure that the most recent scientific knowledge is used in the deliberations and reflected in the recommendations from the Scientific Commission, the Commission is assisted by expert ad hoc Groups knowledgeable on a particular subject as well as the Working Group on
Wildlife Diseases to advise the Commission before recommendations are made for adoption by the World Assembly. Expert ad hoc Groups are also used to evaluate applications from Member Countries for the recognition of disease status and to make recommendations accordingly to the Commission. The Commission was mandated by the World Assembly to re-instate the lost disease status of a Member Country when a disease (FMD, CBPP, AHS, CSF, BSE and PPR) has been successfully contained in accordance with the requirements in the relevant disease chapter of the Terrestrial Code without needing to submit such an application for approval by the World Assembly. The same applies for the establishment of a containment zone in the event of an outbreak of any of the aforementioned diseases. For other applications other than the reinstatement of a lost status or the establishment of a containment zone, the recommendations of the Commission must first be presented for adoption to the World Assembly. The Commission also has a mandate from the World Assembly to consult with the Director General to conduct on-site inspections in Member Countries with a given status to assess compliance with the requirements of the Terrestrial Code for the maintenance of status or to assist Member Countries wishing to move towards status recognition, on the control measures and application of the requirements of the Terrestrial Code.

Taking into account the periodic Strategic Plans adopted by the World Assembly, pertinent Resolutions of the Assembly and the annual work plans approved by the Assembly, the terms of reference of the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases comprises the following:

1. To maintain and exchange information on all aspects of terrestrial animal diseases, and to assess recent developments in the practical problems of control and eradication of infectious diseases and the impact of these developments.

2. To provide scientific guidance to the OIE on the development of policies relating to the assessment and control of diseases, notably those with the potential to affect trade in terrestrial animals and their products or affect human health.

3. To assist the Director General in improving the collection, use and interpretation of statistical information on terrestrial animal diseases, including emerging diseases, for the benefit of OIE Member Countries.

4. To provide up-to-date scientific information to the Director General and the other OIE Specialist Commissions, gathered through its own resources or in consultation with scientists, experts and ad hoc Groups.

5. To advise and assist the Director General on problems relating to such diseases, including problems of disease control at the regional and global level.
6. To propose procedures for formally recognising the animal health status of OIE Member Countries for certain diseases.

7. To undertake, on behalf of the Assembly, an assessment of applications by OIE Member Countries on the status of compliance with OIE standards for animal health status recognition.

8. To identify issues that require in-depth review and to propose to the Director General, the composition and terms of reference ad hoc Groups of experts convened specifically to study such issues, and if necessary, to participate in the work of these Groups.

9. To advise the Director General on the composition and the activities of the Working Group on Wildlife Diseases and to coordinate its work.

10. To examine applications from Member Countries relating to the creation of new OIE Reference Centers with activities corresponding to the Commission’s scientific terms of reference and report its findings to the Director General.

11. To provide, on request of the Director General, technical advice on proposals for the twinning of Reference Centers under Cooperative Capacity Building (“Twinning”) Agreements.

12. To advise the Director General on the status of the lists of the OIE experts and Reference Centers.

13. To reply to relevant queries relating to the methods for the control of terrestrial animal diseases.

14. To represent the OIE at scientific and specialised conferences upon the request of the Director General.

15. To work closely with the Code Commission to harmonize the standards, guidelines and other draft texts submitted to the Assembly for adoption.

1.3.5.3 Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission

The Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission), which was created in 1960, is responsible for ensuring that the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the Terrestrial Code) reflects current scientific information. The Terrestrial Code contains sanitary standards for terrestrial animals and their products, that are referenced under the WTO SPS Agreement as reference standards for international trade.

The Code Commission, which comprises six elected members experienced in regulatory veterinary science drawn from all OIE regions, meets twice yearly to address its work program. The meetings are whenever possible harmonised with the meetings of the Scientific Commission in the months of February and September each year. The Code Commission makes use of
internationally recognised specialists to prepare draft texts for new articles of the Terrestrial Code and to revise existing articles in view of technological advances in veterinary science. The Code Commission also collaborates closely with the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission to establish a harmonised approach, and with the Biological Standards Commission and the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases to ensure the Code Commission is utilising the latest scientific information in the development or amendment of standards. The Code Commission also works closely with the Working Groups on Animal Welfare and Animal Production Food Safety to advise them on the development or amendment of standards on animal welfare and food safety. The views of the Delegates of Member Countries are routinely sought through the circulation of draft and revised texts and, at each General Assembly, the Delegates discuss and formally adopt the draft texts as OIE standards. These texts are then incorporated into the next edition of the Terrestrial Code.

The terms of reference of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission are:

1. To promote the adoption by the General Assembly of animal health (including zoonoses), animal welfare and animal production food safety standards, guidelines and recommendations concerning trade or international movement of animals, birds and bees, and their products. Such standards, guidelines and recommendations are designed to minimise the risks of transmitting diseases (including zoonoses) while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers.

2. To edit, compile and publish an annual compendium of such standards, guidelines and recommendations in the Terrestrial Code in formats and languages as required by the Committee.

3. To advise the Director General on the composition and the activities of the Working Groups on animal welfare and animal production food safety, and to coordinate their work.

4. To develop in collaboration with other OIE Specialist Commissions and with relevant experts:
   a. generic chapters in the Terrestrial Code which address general topics such as evaluation of veterinary services, certification, regionalisation, risk analysis methodology, antimicrobial resistance and which are in harmony with similar recommendations in the OIE Aquatic Animal Health Code.
   b. disease-specific chapters and appendices in the Terrestrial Code which are regularly updated with the latest scientific information, and which provide clear guidance to users on OIE listed terrestrial animal diseases.
5. To identify issues that require in-depth review and to propose to the Director General, the composition and terms of reference of ad hoc Groups convened specifically to deliberate such issues, and if necessary, to participate in the work of these Groups.

6. To advise the Director General on issues relevant to its work arising or being discussed in other international organisations (such as the Codex Alimentarius Commission, the International Plant Protection Convention and the WTO).

7. To represent the OIE at scientific and specialised conferences upon the request of the Director General.

1.3.5.4 Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission

The Aquatic Animals Health Standards Commission (formally the Fish Diseases or Aquatic Commission), which was created in 1960, is responsible for ensuring that the Aquatic Animal Health Code (the Aquatic Code) and Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals (the Aquatic Manual) reflects current scientific information.

The Fish Diseases Commission was created in 1960 due to the increasing awareness of the importance of international trade in fish and other aquatic animals. In 1988, the scope of the Commission was extended to include diseases and pathogens of molluscs and crustaceans and in 2003 the Commission was renamed the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission. In 2008 the scope of the Commission was extended to include pathogens of amphibians.

The Commission, which comprises six elected members, who are internationally renowned experts in surveillance, diagnosis and prevention of infectious diseases and pathogens of aquatic animals, meets twice yearly to address its work program. It works with internationally renowned specialists to prepare draft texts for new articles and chapters of the Aquatic Code and Aquatic Manual and to revise existing articles and chapters in view of advances in veterinary science. The Aquatic Commission also collaborates closely with the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission on issues needing a harmonised approach.

The views of the Delegates of Member Countries are routinely sought through the circulation of draft and revised texts and, at each General Assembly, the Delegates discuss and formally adopt the draft texts as OIE standards. These texts are then incorporated into the next editions of the Aquatic Code and Aquatic Manual.
Taking into account the periodic Strategic Plans adopted by the Assembly, pertinent Resolutions of the Assembly and the annual work plans approved by the Assembly, the Terms of Reference of the Aquatic Animal Standards Commission reflects on its wide scope of work related to aquatic animals:

1. To promote the adoption by the Assembly of standards, recommendations and guidelines for aquatic animal health (including zoonoses), the prevention and control methods of listed diseases, animal welfare and animal production food safety concerning the trade and international movement of aquatic animals and their products. Such standards, guidelines and recommendations are designed to minimise the risks of transmitting diseases (including zoonoses) while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers.

2. To promote the dissemination among Veterinary and other Competent Authorities of information on aquatic animal diseases. For this purpose, standards and guidelines are also provided in the Aquatic Animal Health Code and Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals (the Aquatic Manual).

3. To keep the Assembly and the Director General informed of scientific progress on methods for surveillance, diagnosis and disease prevention likely to improve the prevention and the control of aquatic animal diseases, and to formulate proposals for updating the Aquatic Code and the Aquatic Manual.

4. To develop in collaboration with other OIE Specialist Commissions and with relevant experts:
   a. generic chapters in the Aquatic Code which address general topics such as quality and evaluation of aquatic animal health services including veterinary services, certification, regionalisation, risk analysis methodology, antimicrobial resistance and which are in harmony with similar recommendations in the Terrestrial Code
   b. disease-specific chapters and appendices in the Aquatic Code and the Aquatic Manual which are maintained and updated with the latest scientific information, and which provide clear guidance to users on control of OIE listed aquatic animal diseases and on laboratory diagnostic methods.

5. To identify issues that require in-depth review and propose, to the Director General, the composition and terms of reference of ad hoc Groups of experts convened specifically to study such issues, and if necessary, to participate in the work of these Groups.

6. To advise the Director General on issues relevant to its work arising or being discussed in other international organisations.

7. To reply to all relevant queries made by the Director General, the Assembly
or other OIE Commissions.

8. To examine applications from Member Countries relating to the creation of new OIE Reference Centers with activities corresponding to the Commission’s scientific terms of reference and report its findings to the Director General.

9. To advise the Director General on the status of the lists of the OIE experts and Reference Centers.

10. To provide, on request of the Director General, technical advice on proposals for the twinning of Reference Centers under Cooperative Capacity Building (“Twinning”) Agreements.

11. To facilitate, and work with, Reference Centers in the field of aquatic animal health, so as to achieve OIE’s mandate.

12. To represent the OIE at scientific and specialised conferences upon the request of the Director General.

1.3.3.5 Biological Standards Commission

Founded in 1949, the OIE Biological Standards Commission (BSC), composed of six elected members, is concerned with developing internationally agreed standards for laboratory diagnostic tests and vaccines for OIE-listed animal diseases of mammals, birds and bees. To achieve this, its major activities are:

- To establish or approve methods for diagnosing diseases of mammals, birds and bees and for manufacture and testing of biological products, such as vaccines; and to advise OIE on the appropriate use of diagnostic tests and vaccines;

- An important element in this is the development and supervision of the OIE Register of Diagnostic Assays;

- To oversee production of the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals;

- To select OIE Reference Laboratories for diseases of mammals, birds and bees, and to communicate with these laboratories as a source of specialist expertise;

- To promote the international standardisation of diagnostic tests, including the preparation and distribution of standard reagents.

Neither the OIE nor the Commission distributes reagents directly, but provides contact points in the Reference Laboratories where such materials may be obtained. The Commission has also produced a Quality Standard and Guidelines for laboratories, which is available in booklet form from the OIE Publications Department.
Taking into account the periodic Strategic Plans adopted by the Assembly, pertinent Resolutions of the Assembly and the annual work plans approved by the Assembly, the Terms of Reference of the Biological Standards Commission reflects on its wide scope of scientific responsibilities:

1. To propose methods for the diagnosis and prevention of diseases with respect to international trade or movement of terrestrial animals or their products, particularly diseases included in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the Terrestrial Code).
2. To define standards for biological products, diagnostic preparations, vaccines and immune sera relating to terrestrial animals.
3. To assess and approve applications for the registration of commercial diagnostic kits.
4. To provide, upon request by the Assembly or the Director General, standard technical procedures for other activities included in the Terrestrial Code.
5. To keep the Director General and the Assembly informed of advances in scientific knowledge that could have implications for the diagnosis and prevention of terrestrial animal diseases and to make recommendations on amendments or additions to the Terrestrial Code, as appropriate.
6. To respond to questions relating to their field of competence from the Director General and the Assembly, and collaborate with the other OIE Specialist Commissions and Working Groups.
7. To edit the OIE Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals (the Manual) relating to terrestrial animals.
8. To develop concepts and tools for capacity building of the veterinary scientific community in particular in developing countries.
9. To examine applications from Member Countries relating to the creation of new OIE Reference Centers with activities corresponding to the Commission's scientific mandate and report its findings to the Director General.
10. To advise the Director General on the status of the lists of the OIE experts and Reference Centers.
11. To facilitate, and work with, Reference Centers to achieve OIE's mandate.
12. To provide, on request of the Director General, technical advice on proposals for the twinning of Reference Centers under Cooperative Capacity Building (“Twinning”) Agreements.
13. To identify issues that require in-depth review and propose, to the Director General, the composition and terms of reference of experts or Ad hoc Groups of experts convened specifically to study such issues, and if necessary, to participate in the work of these Groups.
14. To represent the OIE at scientific and specialised conferences upon the
request of the Director General.

1.4 OIE Reference Centers

To strengthen the need for the OIE to maintain a science-based decision-making process, a worldwide network of OIE Reference Centers are in operation. An OIE Reference Centre is designated either as:

- “OIE Reference Laboratory” whose principal mandate is to function as a world reference center of expertise on designated pathogens or diseases;
- “OIE Collaborating Center” whose principal mandate is to function as a world center of research, expertise, standardisation of techniques and dissemination of knowledge on a specialty;

Two or several Reference Centers may also be designated as an OIE Network of Reference Centers, following the Guidance for the Management of OIE Reference Centre Networks. There are for example such networks in operation for FMD, bluetongue and animal influenza. The latter comprises the OFFLU network (OIE/FAO Influenza Network). The network of Collaborating Centers and Reference Laboratories constitutes the core of OIE’s scientific expertise and excellence. The ongoing contribution of these institutes to the OIE work ensures that the standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by the Specialist Commissions and published by the OIE are scientifically sound and up-to-date.

The OIE also has a procedure for the validation and certification of diagnostic assays, based on regular evaluations by experts. The diagnostic tests validated as fit-for-purpose are included in the Register of the OIE.

1.4.1 OIE Collaborating Centers

The assessment of applications by Member Countries for approval for an OIE Collaborating Centre is subject to a process emanating in the Member Country, requesting approval though the OIE Regional Commission within its OIE Region which is then referred to the responsible Specialist Commission as depicted in figure 5 below. Once evaluated and recommended by the appropriate Specialist Commission the application must be approved by the OIE Council before it is submitted to the OIE World Assembly for final adoption. Current OIE policy allows for the designation of only one OIE Collaborating Centre for a functional specialty per Region. In 2013 there were 43 designated OIE Collaborating Centers in 24 countries across the globe of which 4 are situated in Africa (South Africa 2 and one each in Senegal and Ethiopia).
1.4.2 OIE Reference Laboratories

OIE Reference Laboratories are designated to pursue all the scientific and technical problems relating to a designated disease. The designated expert, responsible to the OIE and its Members with regard to these issues, should be a leading and active researcher assisting the Reference Laboratory to provide scientific and technical assistance and expert advice on topics linked to surveillance and control of the disease for which the Reference Laboratory is designated as a Reference Laboratory. Reference Laboratories are also required to provide scientific and technical training for personnel from Members, and coordinate scientific and technical studies in collaboration with other laboratories or organisations, including through OIE Laboratory Twinning initiatives.

In 2013, the OIE had a global network of 241 Reference Laboratories covering 116 diseases/topics in 37 countries of which 10 are in Africa (South Africa 7; Botswana 2 and Senegal 1).

1.4.3 OIE Laboratory Twinning initiative

The OIE Laboratory Twinning programme specifically aims to build much needed capacity and expertise in OIE Member Countries. The current distribution of
technical capacity and expertise – reflected in the geographic locations of OIE Reference Centres – favours developed countries in the northern hemisphere. Twinning aims to create a more even geographical distribution of expertise and to improve compliance with OIE Standards worldwide. Capacity and expertise needs to be extended to developing and in-transition regions and countries so that they can become self-sufficient in expertise for effective surveillance, prevention, and control. This can be achieved through better networking between countries and laboratories.

The OIE Laboratory Twinning Programme establishes sustainable links between OIE Reference Centres and national laboratories in areas that are currently under-represented, leading to an exchange of knowledge, skills, and experience. This creates opportunities to develop technical capacity for disease prevention, surveillance and control based on the OIE International Standards.

The principal objectives are to improve compliance with OIE Standards; to create more OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres in geographic areas that are currently under-represented; to strengthen global and regional scientific networks; and to achieve a better balance in the global distribution of high-level laboratory expertise.

Although the aim of Twinning is to create a more geographically balanced OIE Reference network, by designating new OIE Reference Centres in areas where they are needed, it is acknowledged that not all Candidate Centres will become OIE Reference Centres in the immediate future. In fact this will depend on the state of advancement of Candidate Centres and on their commitment to continue to develop their skills beyond the completion of a Twinning project. However in all cases, Twinning should improve the Candidate Centre’s ability to comply with OIE Standards and provide it with a momentum to fulfil a leading role regionally and worldwide.

Each Twinning project is a partnership between a particular OIE Reference Centre (which may be an OIE Reference Laboratory or an OIE Collaborating Centre) and a Candidate Centre. The OIE Reference Centre provides the Candidate Centre with technical support, guidance, and training. Both laboratories share ideas and experiences. Objectives for each Twinning project are jointly agreed by the OIE and the two partner institutes. The guiding or ‘Parent’ OIE Reference Laboratory and its designated expert, or in the case of a Collaborating Centre an expert designated to be focal point for the twinning, will be the driving force, the Project Manager, ensuring the success of the
A strong relationship will ensure a flow of expertise that will benefit both the Candidate and the Parent Centres. Links should be formed between staff at all levels.

Twinning projects should be mutually beneficial to the Parent and Candidate Centres and Twinning should provide opportunities for experts in both institutes to develop their skills, to work in new and exciting settings, and should create opportunities for joint research projects.

Many OIE Reference Laboratories are located in countries where the diseases of importance for the twinning are no longer present. Twinning provides opportunities for the Parent Centre to have access to diagnostic samples and to disease agents and to work jointly with the Candidate Centre to develop and validate better diagnostic tests. The longer term possibility for joint research and test development means that twinning also has a role to play in advancing science.

Twinning should be flexible and adaptable to a range of situations from, as a first step, helping to report reliable diagnostic results to eventually achieving the level required to become an OIE Reference Centre. To increase the chances of success the project should focus on well defined, achievable and measurable outputs. Clear-set benefits are realised throughout the project allowing it to be divided into stages with set outputs from each stage. Progress can be monitored through achievement of these goals.

The benefits arising from the Twinning project should be sustainable, remain long after the project has closed and lead to the maintenance and further development of expertise in the region. The relationship established between the two institutes over the course of the twinning project should remain a long and lasting one.

The World Animal Health and Welfare Fund, managed by the OIE and supported by donors, provide financial support for twinning projects. This is to support and sustain the link between the two participating institutes for the duration of an approved project and to ensure the effective transfer of expertise and capacity to the Candidate Centre. It is not an objective of Twinning to fund the purchase of laboratory hardware, such as laboratory equipment or construction material. However, the Twinning project may include an assessment of the needs for such hardware, so that other necessary resources – beyond those provided for the Twinning project – can be allocated appropriately.
There is the option for a Twinning project to be funded by the Candidate or Parent country, for instance when the Candidate Centre is located in a country with a high economic status or a bilateral agreement exists between the two countries. In such circumstances the Twinning project is managed by OIE as an OIE Twinning but funds are not provided by OIE to finance or pre-finance the project.

Since the launching of this initiative in 2006, 14 Twinning projects have already been completed with another 27 projects underway. The procedures for application are described in detail on the OIE website and can be accessed at: http://www.oie.int/support-to-oie-members/laboratory-twinning/. The application must be done and signed by the OIE Delegates of both the applicant and the parent country and submitted to the OIE by the Delegate of the parent Member Country.
2. ASSISTANCE TO OIE MEMBER COUNTRIES TO PARTICIPATE IN OIE ACTIVITIES AND TO IMPROVE THEIR VETERINARY SERVICE DELIVERY

The OIE has several on-going activities to assist Member Countries to better equip themselves to meet their obligations as Members of the organisation. These activities have increased substantially over the past 10 years which was further facilitated with additional funding becoming available through donor funding and the World Animal Health and Welfare Fund. Some of these activities are:

2.1 The OIE PVS Pathway

The OIE PVS Pathway is a global program for the sustainable improvement of compliance by the Veterinary Services of a Member Country with OIE standards on the quality of Veterinary Services. This is an important foundation for improving animal and public health and enhancing compliance with SPS standards, at the national, regional and international level. The activities of the Veterinary Services are a global public good and are consequently eligible for appropriate national, regional or international public funding support.

To support these goals, there is a crucial need for appropriate legislation in the animal health and welfare field and its strict implementation through appropriate human and financial resources dedicated to national animal health and welfare systems allowing, in principle, for: (i) early detection of disease incursions, transparency and notification; (ii) rapid response to animal disease outbreaks and implementation of biosecurity and bio-containment measures; (iii) compensation strategies to indemnify animal owners hit by outbreaks; and (iv) vaccination, as appropriate.

Good governance of animal health services based on a close public/private partnership is the responsibility of all governments. If one country fails, it may endanger its neighbouring countries, the region, the continent and potentially the entire planet.

To help ensure the effective performance of the Veterinary Services of Member Countries, the OIE has dedicated two Chapters of the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code to the quality of Veterinary Services.

The OIE international standards and guidelines constitute the basis for independent external country evaluations of the quality of Veterinary Services.
and Animal Health Systems and have been democratically adopted by all OIE Member Countries. A specific methodology has been developed and the OIE has published the “OIE Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services” (the OIE PVS Tool) as the basis for evaluating performance against the international standards published in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code. A similar tool is available for the evaluation of Aquatic Animal Health Services.

Only OIE certified PVS experts can carry out independent external PVS Evaluations of country Veterinary Services and PVS Gap Analysis. They have undergone training sessions organised by the OIE and funded by donors to the OIE World Fund. All experts use standard tools, indicators and Experts’ Manuals, prepared and published by the OIE Headquarters, which also include template reports.

Regular feedback sessions are organised with OIE certified PVS experts for monitoring and evaluation purposes and also for the periodic updating of the OIE PVS Tool and the PVS Gap Analysis Tool.

Since 2006, the OIE has progressively developed the OIE PVS Pathway which takes the country PVS Evaluation using the OIE PVS Tool and PVS Gap Analysis missions as first steps and integrates them into a comprehensive, staged approach providing targeted support for the systematic strengthening of Veterinary Services based on international standards.

The following diagram is the visual representation of the OIE strategy regarding the use of OIE standards on the quality of Veterinary Services and guidelines on veterinary legislation:

The PVS evaluation of a country is a quality assessment and takes into consideration 4 generic components of veterinary service delivery namely Human and physical Resources; Technical Authority and Capability; Interaction with Stakeholders and Access to Markets. Within these four fundamental components 46 critical competencies are assessed in terms of the level of advancement of each competency on a scale from basic level 1 implying no compliance with OIE standards to level 5 which indicates full compliance with OIE standards.

An initial PVS evaluation can on the voluntary request of the Member Country be followed with a PVS Pathway follow-up mission. Periodic PVS Pathway follow-up missions provide a way of measuring the progress that countries
have made in sustainably improving their compliance with the OIE quality standards set out in the OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code. These missions should be conducted by OIE PVS certified experts at the request of the country in question. The initial country PVS evaluation is the baseline founded on democratically adopted OIE international standards on quality of Veterinary Services.

Ideally following an initial PVS evaluation, a Member Country should also be subjected to a PVS Gap Analysis mission. A PVS Gap Analysis mission facilitates the definition of a country’s Veterinary Services’ objectives in terms of compliance with OIE quality standards, suitably adapted to national constraints and priorities. The country PVS Gap Analysis report includes an indicative annual budget and one exceptional budget (for exceptional investments), when relevant, consolidated to propose an indicative 5-year Budget for the country’s Veterinary Services.

More than a diagnostic instrument, the OIE PVS Tool and the OIE PVS Tool: Aquatic promote a culture of raising awareness and continual improvement, which can be used either passively or actively depending on the level of interest, priorities and commitment of the Veterinary Services and interested parties. In the passive mode, the OIE PVS Tool and the OIE PVS Tool: Aquatic help
to raise awareness and improve the understanding of all sectors including other administrations regarding the fundamental components and critical competencies these services must have in order to function effectively.

The active mode is where the maximum outcomes are realised but this mode requires a sustained commitment on the part of both the public and private sectors, that is, all relevant interested parties. In this mode, performance is assessed, differences are explored and priorities are established. This mode is where strategic actions are outlined, investments are evaluated and agreed to, and commitments made and implemented. Continuity of this process requires a true partnership between the public and the private sectors. Leadership on the part of the public sector is a fundamental and critical determinant of success.

Until May 2013 a total of 116 PVS evaluations were completed with 49 in African countries while 64 Gap analysis missions were completed in the same period of which 34 in African countries. Delegates who so wish, can give permission that the reports of these missions are made public or only be distributed to donors and partners or remain confidential. As for Africa, there are reports available to donors and partners of 38 Member Countries in Africa for PVS evaluation missions and 21 for Gap Analysis missions.

The choice of a Member Country to be subjected to a PVS evaluation, follow-up evaluations or a Gap Analysis is entirely voluntary. The applicant Member Country is responsible to carry all the costs for the logistical arrangements of the missions while the OIE only cover the costs of the experts when member Countries are visited. Following a PVS evaluation a Member Country has the choice not to share the results of the evaluation, or to share it only with chosen stakeholders or to make it public in which case the entire evaluation report will be posted on the OIE website at http://www.oie.int/support-to-oie-members/pvs-evaluations/oie-pvs-evaluation-reports/ and accessible by other Member Countries or the anyone accessing the OIE website. To date there are PVS reports of 5 African countries available on the OIE website.

2.2 Enhancing veterinary legislation
Veterinary legislation is an essential element of the national infrastructure that enables Veterinary Services to efficiently carry out their key functions, including epidemiological surveillance; early detection and reporting of diseases, including zoonoses; rapid response to and prevention and control of sanitary emergencies; animal products food safety; animal welfare and the relevant certification of animals and animal products for export. In view of
increasing global trade, climate change and the emergence and re-emergence of diseases that can rapidly spread across international borders, the Veterinary Services must be supported by effective and modern legislation. This is why the development and efficient implementation of legislation is included among the 46 critical competencies identified in the OIE PVS Tool for the Evaluation of Performance of Veterinary Services.

The OIE is aware that in many countries veterinary legislation is outdated and inadequate to meet current and future challenges and societal expectations. In 2009, at the request of Members, the OIE developed Guidelines on Veterinary Legislation, setting out the essential elements that should be covered by legislation to meet the OIE quality standards.

As a follow up to an evaluation of the Performance of Veterinary Services (PVS) using the OIE PVS Tool, and at the request of Members, the OIE conducts missions to help governments that wish to modernise the national veterinary legislation and thereby help the veterinary services to meet the OIE standards. After an initial ‘identification’ mission the country may request longer term collaboration with the OIE, under a formal agreement, with the objective of modernising the national veterinary legislation.

As with other elements of the OIE PVS Pathway, legislation missions are undertaken by experts who are trained and certified by the OIE for this purpose. Mission reports are confidential unless/until the country authorises release to Donors or other OIE partners.

As of May 2013, the OIE has conducted 32 Veterinary Legislation missions of which 17 were in African countries.

2.3 Enhancing Veterinary Education
The veterinary profession, which celebrated its 250th anniversary in 2011, has a key role in society now and in the future. Fulfilling this role requires that veterinarians are highly competent and that they respect ethical rules and practices. The principles for professional conduct are the subject of international standards published in the OIE Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Codes, with consensual adoption by all OIE Members. Society expects that veterinarians demonstrate professional ethics and competence – and this depends on high quality initial and continuing veterinary education to give each veterinarian at least a minimum knowledge on key topics relevant to societal demands (e.g. on animal health, food safety and animal welfare). Unfortunately,
the quality of veterinary education is not acceptable in many countries today. Veterinary education needs to be strengthened globally, notably with respect to:

- the establishment of minimum competencies, as it relates to the delivery of national veterinary services;
- the harmonisation of key curriculum elements, to facilitate international mobility of veterinarians;
- the harmonisation of approaches to the recognition of veterinary education establishments globally; and
- the administration by the Veterinary Statutory Body (VSB) at national regulatory framework for the veterinary profession.

With the support of its Members, the OIE has become the leading global organisation addressing these and related issues. Veterinary Services of quality, comprising both public and private sectors, that can implement the OIE standards, are recognised as ‘global public goods’ and there is an urgent need, particularly in the developing world, to strengthen their competence. Veterinary education of quality and effective veterinary statutory bodies are the cornerstones of good governance of Veterinary Services; quality and international harmonisation contribute to improving animal health and welfare globally.

In 2012 the OIE published recommendations on the competencies of graduating veterinarians (‘Day 1 graduates’) to ensure the quality of national Veterinary Services at the entry-level. These recommendations are relevant to all Member Countries, regardless of the prevailing societal, economic and political circumstances.

As is the case for OIE Reference Centers, the OIE has also initiated a Twinning program for Veterinary Education. The Veterinary Education Twinning Programme has evolved from the on-going work of the OIE to develop the OIE PVS Pathway, drawing on the recommendations on Day 1 Competencies and on the Model Core Curriculum Guidelines, as well as on the OIE Recommendations on the Competencies of Graduating Veterinarians (Day 1 Graduates) and on the lessons learned from the OIE Veterinary Laboratory Twinning Initiative. This programme essentially involves creating and supporting a link that facilitates the exchange of knowledge, ideas and experience between two Veterinary Education Establishments. ‘Twinning’ has been adopted by the OIE as a method for improving institutional capacity and expertise in developing and in-transition countries. A recent example of the successful application of
twinning on a large scale was the European Union (EU) enlargement (pre-accession) programme. Over 1,000 twinning projects were implemented to assist accession countries in meeting and maintaining the standards required for entry into the EU. The OIE has also gained experience in this concept with its continuing Laboratory Twinning Programme. The OIE Veterinary Education Twinning Programme is therefore expected to create opportunities for developing and in-transition countries to develop modern educational facilities and methods, based on accepted international standards. This will be achieved through individual twinning projects. The eventual aim is to create more centres of excellence for veterinary education in geographic areas that are currently under-represented, and to achieve a better balance in the global distribution of well-educated veterinarians.

Each twinning project is a partnership between one or more recognised and preferably accredited Veterinary Education Establishments and a Candidate Veterinary Education Establishment. The Candidate Establishment may wish at a later stage to eventually achieve accreditation under an existing, well established accreditation body, and/or any other possible current or future well-established international accreditation or recognition mechanism. The accredited veterinary establishment(s) could provide technical assistance, guidance and training. Objectives for each twinning project are jointly agreed by the OIE and the Directors/Deans of the participants (i.e. the Parent and Candidate Establishments) and endorsed by the National Delegates to the OIE of the countries concerned. The guiding or Parent Establishment(s) and their designated expert(s) will be teamed with counterparts in the Candidate Establishment and would be the driving force, ensuring the success of the project. A strong relationship will ensure a flow of expertise that benefits the Candidate Establishment. Links should be formed between staff (teachers) and students at all levels. The concept should be flexible and adaptable to a range of situations. For example, possible steps might include helping to implement self-assessment to develop a comprehensive strategic plan for the development of the faculty; this plan could then provide the basis for a long-term collaborative Memorandum of Understanding and commitment between the Parent and Candidate Establishments and provide for more specific interventions and activities related to curriculum development; preparation of facilities design, including capital fundraising; faculty-upgrading programmes (MSc/PhD); Veterinary Faculty teacher and student exchanges; graduate programmes; and collaborative research. The signing of the Memorandum of Understanding could trigger possible additional funding through donor and other organisations to support the eventual long-term objective(s) and could allow the Candidate
Establishment to achieve its goal of improving the quality of veterinary education that it delivers. Twinning aims to upgrade veterinary education, especially in relation to the needs of national Veterinary Services, to meet satisfactorily the international standards established by the OIE. At the request of the country concerned, the Veterinary Services can be evaluated in the framework of the PVS Pathway.

The benefits from the twinning project should be sustainable, should continue long after the project has been completed and should lead to the maintenance and further development of veterinary and educational expertise in the region. The twinning project may, however, include an assessment of the needs and costs (civil engineering, buildings) for such hardware as part of the strategic plan, so that other necessary resources beyond those provided for twinning can be allocated appropriately. The twinning partners would be expected to advocate for this strategic plan with the Government of the Candidate Establishment and donors to identify potential sources of finance for capital projects, facility upgrades and equipment or research grants which could contribute to this effort. Twinning is part of the wider OIE initiative to improve the capacity of Veterinary Services in developing countries; it therefore has synergy with the OIE PVS Pathway and the complementary OIE Laboratory Twinning Programme.

2.4 Expert missions to Member Countries

No Member Country is immune against sudden disease incursions and when such incursions might threat a region, is threatening to the economy of a country or even in the case of an emerging disease appearing for the first time in a Member Country, the OIE can through its access to a wide spectrum of animal disease experts and diagnosticians, constitute within a relatively short time an expert mission to assist and advise a country. The OIE is also a partner in the OIE/FAO/WHO Crisis Management Centre at FAO offices in Rome and often form part of such emergency missions to countries through the CMC-AH system. The CMC-AH (Crisis Management Centre – Animal health) is a joint OIE-FAO mechanism to provide rapid technical advice and support to countries requesting assistance with animal disease crises. This technical assistance is provided by a CMC-AH multidisciplinary expert team which is deployed to a country following a specific request. The CMC-AH was initially established in response to the rapid global spread of highly pathogenic avian influenza H5N1; however in recent times missions have been triggered by other aquatic and terrestrial animal health disease events. Collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) is an important part of the response when animal health crises involve zoonoses (infectious diseases that can be
Operations and logistics are managed from FAO Headquarters in Rome and expert support is provided by OIE and FAO’s network of expertise including OIE Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centers. The CMC-AH links with other OIE, FAO and WHO mechanisms including OIE-PVS Pathway and the tripartite Global Early Warning and Response System for Major Animal Diseases, including Zoonoses (GLEWS).

Over and above expert missions to assist Member Countries in the case of emergencies, missions are also undertaken to assess compliance with the standards in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code for the maintenance of disease status for OIE diseases liable for official status recognition (FMD, BSE, CBPP, CSF, AHS and PPR) or to assist Member Countries wishing to progress towards official status recognition to apply the correct disease control methods. Countries wishing assistance from the OIE in progressing towards obtaining a given disease status, can apply directly to the Director General of the OIE for guidance or assistance and for consideration by the OIE Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases of their request. Visits to Member Countries by an OIE expert mission to assess compliance with the Terrestrial Code requirements for a given disease status, are done at the entire cost of the applicant Member Country.

### 2.5 OIE National Focal Points

During the 76th General Assembly of the World Assembly of National Delegates in May 2008 the importance of the focal point for information on animal diseases was re-iterated and Delegates were also requested to nominate additional focal points for wildlife, veterinary products, animal production food safety, animal welfare and aquatic animals. The list was later further complimented by providing for National Focal Points for communication and veterinary laboratories.

- The responsibilities of the focal points are under the authority of the OIE Delegate. Any information transmitted to the OIE from the different focal points needs to be transmitted under the designated authority of the OIE Delegate. This practice would equally apply, if focal points are located in other Departments or Ministries not under jurisdiction of the Veterinary Authority, as from a legal perspective, the OIE considers the official OIE Delegate to be the unique representative of the country. Focal points were thus primarily introduced to assist the Delegate to meet his or her obligations to the OIE. They should support the Delegate in for example...
commenting draft standards proposed by the OIE, supporting the Delegate in preparing and implementing appropriate legislation and are technical contact points with the OIE regional offices and headquarters, under the authority of the Delegate.
3. **THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN THE OIE AND OTHER INTERNATIONAL ORGANISATIONS**

The OIE has since its founding in 1924, remained an independent intergovernmental organisation but works closely with other international organisations. To facilitate this mutual cooperation and understanding the OIE has signed cooperative agreements with more than 58 International, industry related and non-governmental organisations. Although all of them are of importance to the OIE, the Agreements signed with the most relevant sister organisations having a direct linkage with the activities of the OIE, are those Agreements signed with the FAO, WHO, WTO and the World Bank.

3.1 **FAO (Food and Agricultural Organisation of the United Nations)**

This Agreement between the OIE and FAO was signed again in 2004, replacing former Agreements and aims to coordinate their efforts in the control of animal diseases and safety of food within the framework of their respective mandates. The Agreement clearly defines the spheres of responsibility of the two organisations with the OIE primarily responsible for establishment of standards, guidelines and recommendations relevant to animal diseases and zoonoses in accordance with its Statutes and as defined in the WTO-SPS Agreement and the development and updating of international science-based reference standards and validation of diagnostic tests published in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code, Aquatic Animal Health Code, Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals and Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals. The FAO on the other hand is primarily responsible for establishment of guidelines and recommendations on good agricultural practices relevant to the management of animal diseases and zoonoses; the development of programs and coordination of activities with other relevant organizations for the effective prevention and progressive control of important animal diseases, including promotion of the collection and analysis of information on the national distribution and impact of these diseases, and provision of relevant technical assistance, particularly in developing countries and the establishment of international food safety standards, guidelines and other recommendations through the FAO/WHO Codex Alimentarius Commission in accordance with its Statutes and as defined in the WTO-SPS agreement.

The Agreement however also defines the areas of joint activities and collaboration on a variety aspects related to animal health and production. One of the most prominent outcomes of the Agreement is the GFTAD’s cooperative arrangement. The GF-TADs (Global Framework for the progressive control of
Transboundary Animal Diseases) is a joint FAO/OIE initiative which combines the strengths of both organisations to achieve agreed common objectives. It is a facilitating mechanism which endeavours to empower regional alliances in the fight against transboundary animal diseases (TADs), to provide for capacity building and to assist in establishing programmes for the specific control of certain TADs based on regional priorities. The successful global control of rinderpest and the newer global control programs such as for FMD and PPR are examples of actions related to the control of TADs under the GFTADs umbrella.

3.2 WHO (World Health Organisation)
This Agreement was signed in 2004 and replaced the Agreement signed initially in 1960. The Agreement between the OIE and WHO aims to co-ordinate their efforts for the promotion and improvement of veterinary public health (VPH), and food security and safety, and to collaborate closely for this purpose. The Agreement spells out a wide spectrum of cooperation, collaboration and mutual support. The significance of the Agreement was especially emphasised with the highly pathogenic avian influenza pandemic in the beginning of the 21st century as well as with other events related to the human-animal interface such as the outbreak of H1N1 influenza in humans that had a link with the same pathogen in pigs as well as the more recent outbreak of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome Coronavirus outbreak (MERS –CoV) where both organisations worked closely together to investigate a possible source of the virus including a possible animal source. It is especially on the control and prevention of zoonotic diseases such as AI, rabies, brucellosis and tuberculosis that the OIE and WHO has a very close collaboration as well as on the so called “neglected zoonotic diseases”.

3.3 WTO (World Trade Organisation)
The Agreement was signed in 1998 following the conclusion of the Marrakesh Agreement for the establishment of the WTO and in particular to the Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures, annexed as an integral part of the Marrakesh Agreement, particularly the provisions which concern the OIE. Meetings of both organisations are attended reciprocally in Paris and Geneva. Within the SPS Agreement the OIE is identified as the only international organisation for setting standards for animal health and are acknowledged as such in any trade dispute between countries in relation to the application of standards as determined within the SPS Agreement.

The Agreement was signed in 2001 The World Bank or also known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International
3.4 WB (World Bank)
The Agreement was signed in 2001. The World Bank, or also known as the International Bank for Reconstruction and Development and the International Development Association, in the Agreement confirms their commitment to coordinate their actions aimed at combating animal diseases and in doing so improve the safety of food of animal origin, improve food security, facilitate sustained international trade and thus contribute to poverty alleviation. To enhance their common objectives, the two organizations continue to develop close collaboration within the framework of their respective formal mandates. The World Bank has since signing of the Agreement been involved in several global disease control initiatives such as the global effort to control the H5N1 HPAI pandemic and also lately with the launching of the Global program for FMD control.

3.5 OIE/WHO/FAO Tripartite Agreement
Over and above the above individual Agreements between the OIE, WHO and the FAO, the 3 organisations in 2010 signed a tripartite concept note to spell out clearly the collaboration between the three organisations to share responsibilities and coordinate global activities to address health risks at the animal-human-ecosystems interfaces. Within this concept note, contrary to many misunderstandings created by the propagation of the One-World-One Health concept, the role of each organisation within its given mandate is clearly outlined while making provision to coordinate and collaborate on activities within the human-animal ecosystems interface.

FAO, OIE and WHO recognized that addressing health risks at the human-animal-ecosystems interfaces requires strong partnerships among players who may have different perspectives on some issues and different levels of resources. These partnerships which could include partnerships between international organizations, governments, civil society and donors – must be coordinated to minimize the burden on member countries of multiple monitoring, reporting and delivery systems, and to avoid duplicated efforts and fragmented outcomes. A framework for collaboration is necessary at national and international levels, with clear roles and responsibilities. There is also a need to strengthen animal and human health institutions, as well as partnerships, and to manage existing and novel diseases that will be of public health, agricultural, social and economic importance in the future. When appropriate, protocols and standards for managing emerging zoonotic diseases should be jointly developed.
In the case of high-impact zoonotic diseases, improvements in governance, infrastructure and capacity building will also prove valuable to secure the livelihoods of vulnerable populations. A joint framework to address gaps and strengthen collaboration in human and animal health laboratory activities should be developed. The framework should cover the upgrading of facilities, training and collaboration between regional and international reference laboratories for diagnosis and quality assurance. The framework should also promote cooperation between human and animal surveillance systems in analysing available evidence and evaluating responses and the timely sharing of comparable epidemiological and pathogen data across the relevant sectors. The three organizations will work to achieve alignment and coherence of related global standard setting activities (Codex Alimentarius, OIE and IPPC) referred to in the World Trade Organization (WTO) Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures. This approach does not signify integrating these institutions or building new institutions; rather, the three agencies should continue to improve communication and coordination based on their respective existing structures and mechanisms, including consideration for the publication of common standards. The existing Codex Alimentarius (FAO/WHO) framework for risk analysis can form the foundation for sound, scientifically-based risk assessment, management and communication. Similarly, the OIE has adopted and published global standards for terrestrial and aquatic animals recognized by the WTO. This alliance could lead to the preparation of tripartite protocols for risk assessment, management and communication, including recommendations and guidance for countries on identifying data gaps. Effective strategies for improving national, regional and community level pandemic preparedness and response should be further developed or refined. This tripartite relationship envisages complementary work to develop normative standards and field programs to achieve One Health goals.

The 3 organisations meet officially on an annual basis for a Tri-Partite Meeting to identify common issues and activities and priorities. During the 2013 conference between the Tri-Partite partner’s attention to and mutual cooperation in relation to zoonotic influenzas, rabies and antimicrobial resistance were identified as the critical priority areas.
4. THE OIE STANDARD SETTING PROCESS

4.1 Introduction
In the current trend of globalisation and the increased risk of the fast global spread of pathogens, animal health measures have escalated in importance to facilitate safe international trade of animals and animal products while avoiding unnecessary impediments to trade. The Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement) therefore encourages the members of the World Trade Organization (WTO) to base their sanitary measures on international standards, guidelines and recommendations, where they exist. The OIE is the WTO reference organisation for standards relating to animal health and zoonoses. The OIE publishes 2 Codes (Terrestrial and Aquatic) and 2 Manuals (Terrestrial and Aquatic) as the principle reference to OIE standards for WTO members. The Terrestrial Animal Health Code and Aquatic Animal Health Code respectively aim to assure the sanitary safety of international trade in terrestrial animals and aquatic animals, and their products. The OIE regularly updates its international standards in accordance with new scientific information and technological advances, following its established transparent and democratic adoption procedures. The only pathway for adoption of a standard is via approval by the World Assembly of Delegates at their meeting in May each year at the OIE General Assembly. After adoption, these standards are published in updated in the respective volumes of the Codes and Manuals.

The OIE also has several other scientific publications such as the OIE Scientific and Technical Review, the OIE Bulletin, proceedings of conferences and many other Technical information brochures, pamphlets and guidelines. However, only the Codes and Manuals are reference documents for OIE standards as only they contain standards that have been subjected to a democratic developmental and adoption process. These standards can therefore in terms of the SPS Agreement, be quoted and used in any trade dispute or cross-referenced to a Member Country’s own national legislation. In addition to this, the Resolutions adopted by the World Assembly during the General Assembly each year, are also binding on Member Countries such as the Resolutions on compulsory financial contributions by Member Countries, procedures for the application and maintenance of disease status, the execution of global disease control programs and the annual working program of the OIE.
4.2  Important aspects of the OIE Standard setting process

4.2.1. The OIE publications

The publications that are commonly referred to, collectively, as the OIE standards are:
- the Terrestrial Animal Health Code (the Terrestrial Code)
- the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals (the Terrestrial Manual)
- the Aquatic Animal Health Code (the Aquatic Code)

The Terrestrial Animal Health Code was first published in 1968 and the Aquatic Animal Health Code was introduced to the public in 1995. The codes traditionally addressed animal health and zoonoses, but they have, in recent years, expanded to cover animal welfare, animal production food safety, consistent with the expanded mandate of the OIE which is ‘to improve animal health worldwide’.

The Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals and the Manual of Diagnostic Tests for Aquatic Animals provide a harmonised approach to disease diagnosis by describing internationally agreed laboratory diagnostic techniques. These manuals were first published in 1989 and in 1995, respectively.

The Terrestrial Code and the Aquatic Code contain science-based recommendations for disease reporting, prevention and control and for assuring safe international trade in terrestrial animals (mammals, birds and bees) and aquatic animals (amphibians, fish, crustaceans and molluscs) and their products. The Codes detail the sanitary measures for animal diseases, including zoonoses, which should be used by the Veterinary Services and other Competent Authorities of importing and exporting countries. Correctly applied, these measures prevent the introduction and spread, via animals and their products, of agents that are pathogenic for animals and/or humans.

The Terrestrial Manual and the Aquatic Manual contain OIE international standards on quality management in testing laboratories, principles of validation and quality control of diagnostic assays, and diagnostic testing methods for specific diseases including official tests listed in the Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes. The Terrestrial Manual also provides generic and specific guidance on vaccine quality. In addition to the Manual, the OIE publishes a list of approved Standard Sera (reagents) produced by OIE Reference Laboratories, validates and certifies commercially-available diagnostic assays, and publishes a list of the tests
certified ‘fit for purpose’ in the OIE Register of Diagnostic Tests. Assessment of diagnostic tools for terrestrial animals is carried out under the auspices of the OIE Biological Standards Commission (Laboratories Commission). For aquatic animals, assessment of diagnostic tools is the responsibility of the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission (Aquatic Animals Commission).

4.3 The Procedures for the development and updating of the OIE Terrestrial and Aquatic Animal Health Codes

4.3.1. General considerations

The procedures for developing and updating the Terrestrial Code and the Aquatic Code are responsive, transparent and rapid. Importantly, they provide a basis for continuous improvement of standards as new scientific information becomes available and for ‘fast track’ adoption of new standards when Member Countries need to address important new risks to human and animal health on an urgent basis.

Each one of the OIE Member Countries has an equal voice in the development and adoption of standards and each Member Country has a responsibility to engage with the OIE in this important work. Partner organisations may attend technical sessions of the General Assembly in an observer capacity but they do not have the right to participate in the adoption of standards. Discussion and decisions of the World Assembly on the adoption of standards are recorded in a report presented for adoption at the end of the General Assembly. This report is provided to Delegates and is placed on the OIE website accessible to the public.

Revisions to the Codes are adopted via Resolutions. In almost all cases, standards are adopted by consensus. In a small minority of cases, where it is not possible to achieve consensus, standards have been adopted after a vote. Voting is normally done by a show of hands and a two-thirds majority is sufficient for the adoption of a standard. More than half the Delegates representing Member Countries must be present in order to have a quorum for the adoption of standards.

Recommendations on new standards and on significant revisions of existing standards are developed by small groups of independent experts (ad hoc Groups), which report to a Specialist Commission. Reporting may be direct to the Specialist Commission or, depending on the topic, via a permanent OIE Working Group, which in turn reports to Specialist Commissions. Membership
of Working Groups is proposed by the Director General and is endorsed by the World Assembly. All draft texts are reviewed by the relevant Specialist Commission, then provided to OIE Member Countries for comment. All comments submitted by Member Countries are reviewed by the Specialist Commissions, who may deal with comments directly or may send them to the ad hoc Group and/or Working Group for consideration and advice, as appropriate. The reports of ad hoc Groups submitted to Specialist Commissions, as well as the Commission’s review of Member Country comments are documented in the meeting report of the Specialist Commission, which is sent to Member Countries after each meeting and is also placed on the OIE website. In March of each year, as part of the meeting report of the Specialist Commissions that have met by February, all texts proposed for adoption at the General Assembly in May of each year, are sent to Member Countries for consideration prior to presentation to the World Assembly for adoption. Twice yearly, following distribution of Specialist Commission reports, OIE Member Countries have the opportunity (normally during a 60 day period) to submit written comments. Although there is no provision for written comments to be presented to the General Assembly, there is opportunity to make oral statements and to request clarification of texts before adoption.

The normal cycle for the adoption of new texts in the Codes is two years, meaning that the development of a new text is the subject of consultation with OIE Member Countries on two to four occasions during that period. In the case of emergency situations warranting a more rapid procedure, standards may be developed within a shorter period. Less significant modifications to existing texts may also be undertaken in a one year period, if Member Countries agree to the proposed modifications.

4.3.2. The input process for setting new standards or amending existing standards

Requests for the development of a new standard or the revision of an existing standard are submitted to the OIE from various sources. Proposals from OIE Delegates are given highest priority, particularly if several OIE Member Countries support the request for example expressing a common position through the relevant OIE Regional Commission. Proposals from international and regional organisations that have official agreements with the OIE are also given priority. Requests from other organisations, be they scientific, industry or non-governmental organisations (NGO), are also considered when appropriate. A Specialist Commission may propose new studies to be undertaken by itself or by another Specialist Commission. Proposals for developing new or revised standards are identified in the work programmes of the Specialist Commissions
and permanent working groups, which are submitted annually to OIE Delegates for information during the General Assembly.

The OIE Strategic Plan sets out the priorities, strategies and overall direction of the OIE’s work programme, including the priorities for standard setting. The Strategic Plan is developed under the direct supervision of the Director-General in consultation with the OIE Council and submitted by him to the World Assembly for approval once every five years. The current OIE Strategic Plan (2011–2016) was adopted in May 2010.

The five Regional Commissions (Asia, Far East and Oceania; Americas; Europe; Africa and Middle-East) often provide important priorities for standard setting. The Recommendations adopted by Regional Commissions, and those voted at OIE Global Conferences, often identify a need for the OIE to develop standards relevant to matters of strategic importance. These recommendations are presented to the World Assembly for endorsement at each General Assembly.

4.4. Role-players in the setting and development of OIE standards

4.4.1 The OIE Specialist Commissions

Specialist Commissions play a central role in the OIE standard setting procedures. In the case of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission), the opinions of the Scientific Commission on Animal Diseases (Scientific Commission) and the Laboratories Commission are critical in determining whether there is sufficient scientific information to support the development of a new or revised standard. In effect, the absence of key information, notably on disease aetiology or diagnostic methods, prevents the development of a new standard. The Code Commission and the Scientific Commission regularly convene a one-day joint meeting to discuss matters of common interest and harmonise work programmes on the development of standards. Communications between Specialist Commissions are documented in their meeting reports.

The reports of the Terrestrial Code, Aquatic Code, Scientific and Laboratories Commissions, along with their work programmes, are adopted annually by the World Assembly. In the period between the General Assembly, opportunities are also provided for comment.
The work programmes of the Specialist Commissions are established within the overall framework of the OIE Strategic Plan. Proposals received by these Commissions are evaluated in terms of:

i. the likely extent of Members’ support, as evidenced from comments relevant to the request; and
ii. the availability of scientific information needed to develop a standard.

- The Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases is responsible for drafting texts for eventual inclusion in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code and for the recognition of Member Countries’ official disease status.
- The Biological Standards Commission is responsible for the Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals and for the approval of standard sera and the certification of diagnostic assays.

The Specialist Commissions meet twice each year. At their bi-annual meetings, the Specialist Commissions examine submissions made by OIE Member Countries and submissions from other sources, and the reports of relevant Working Groups and ad hoc Groups that have held meetings in the preceding semester. The Code Commission also considers submissions from the Scientific Commission on draft texts for possible inclusion in the Terrestrial Code. The two Commissions responsible for the Codes regularly consult on the harmonisation of horizontal aspects.

The Commissions determine how to incorporate scientific recommendations into new or revised standards. While submissions from OIE Member Countries and OIE Reference Centres are of greatest importance, Commissions also consider scientific information from other sources, including OIE partner organisations and both private sector and non-governmental organisations, expert opinions from OIE Reference Centres to ensure that the proposed standards are based on comprehensive and up-to-date scientific information.
Each Specialist Commission compiles a meeting report that includes, as annexed documents, the reports of all Working Groups and ad hoc Groups considered by the Commission. The meeting report also explains how the various submissions were addressed. OIE Member Countries and others submitting comments are encouraged to provide a scientific rationale for their comments, to facilitate analysis by Specialist Commissions.

On circulation of the reports of the Specialist Commissions after their February/March and September meetings of each year, OIE Member Countries are invited to comment on the recommendations in the reports of Specialist Commissions. As a general rule, proposed new or amended text for chapters in the Terrestrial Code, are distributed with the reports of the Code Commission, even if such new text or amended text was developed by the Scientific Commission. It is therefore important to consult the reports of both Commissions in the preparation of comments as the rationale for new or amended text is often included in the report of the Scientific Commission and not in the report of the Code Commission. Organisations with which the OIE has formal agreements may also be invited to provide advice/comments, depending on the relevant areas of expertise.

Thus, the ‘two-year standard setting cycle’ comment period may afford as many as four opportunities for comments. All Commission reports, in English, French and Spanish are available on the OIE website. Initially during the period of comment they are placed on the restricted OIE website for OIE Delegates but thereafter also on the public OIE website.

In reviewing draft new or revised standards in the Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes, the relevant Commissions consider the extent to which OIE Member Countries support the recommendations and the rationale provided, particularly in the case of criticisms of a draft text. If, after at least two rounds of comment, there is widespread support for the proposed new or revised standard, the relevant Commissions may decide to submit the chapter for adoption at the following OIE General Assembly. If, however, significant concern is expressed or if Member Country comments suggest a need for further technical justification, the relevant Commissions may re-examine the issue. If scientific or technical questions outside its expertise are raised, the Commissions will normally ask the Scientific Commission, the relevant Working Group or ad hoc Group to re-examine the issues and provide advice to the relevant Commissions. Another round of consultation with OIE Member Countries will then be undertaken.
In reviewing draft new or revised standards in the Terrestrial and Aquatic Manuals, the Laboratories Commission and the Aquatic Animals Commission rely on the preparatory work done by one or more OIE experts or an ad hoc Group. When Commissions consider that after one round of comments a draft standard is ready for adoption, they submit the draft standard to the World Assembly. Thus, OIE Member Countries have the opportunity to comment on at least two occasions before final adoption.

4.4.2. OIE Working Groups
The OIE currently has three ‘permanent’ Working Groups under the auspices of the Specialist Commissions which are responsible for specific advice and recommendations to the Specialist Commissions:

- The Animal Welfare Working Group reports to the Code or Aquatic Animals Commissions, as relevant to the topic.
- The Animal Production Food Safety Working Group reports to the Code or Aquatic Animals Commissions, as relevant to the topic.

OIE Working Groups play an important role in recommending standards in the three thematic areas. The work programme of each Working Group is presented to the relevant Specialist Commission and, via the report of the Commissions, to the World Assembly for information and comment.

To assist in addressing new themes and significant developments, Working Groups may take responsibility for drafting discussion papers and strategy papers to establish key principles and directions for the OIE and Specialist Commissions to follow in standard setting. In all cases, these papers, along with the recommendations of Specialist Commissions, are provided to OIE Member Countries for information and comment. Once endorsed, Working Group papers can provide a framework and key principles for OIE standard setting.

Members of Specialist Commissions may participate in Working Groups as observers to facilitate communication between these Working Groups and the relevant Commission. However, a member of a Specialist Commission may not chair a Working Group.
In addition to being circulated with the reports of Specialist Commissions, Working Group reports, after approval by the relevant Commission, are placed on dedicated pages on the OIE website along with other information relevant to the theme. The terms of reference and membership of OIE Working Groups are included on these thematic website pages. The members of the Working Groups are nominated by the Director General of the OIE and endorsed by the World Assembly annually at the General Assembly. These are proposals made at each General Session by the Director General for adoption by the General Assembly and Member Countries then have the opportunity to propose other members for the Working Groups if they wish to do so. If for example Africa wishes to nominate an identified expert to serve on a particular Working Group, this should be considered by the African Delegates before the General Session and proposed during the session at the World Assembly when the Director General proposes the members of Working Groups for adoption. This is done annually at each General Session. In addition to representation from the five OIE regions, relevant public and private sector partners of the OIE may participate in Working Groups.

4.4.3 OIE ad hoc Groups

The initial drafting of a new standard and any significant revision of an existing standard is normally undertaken by a group of experts in that particular field recommended by the relevant Specialist Commission in consultation with the Director General requesting the Director General to convene an ad hoc Group tasked with the work in question. OIE ad hoc Groups normally comprise up to six scientists with internationally recognised expertise in a disease or topic. OIE Reference Centres (comprising Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres) are a common source of experts but participants are also drawn from academia, industry organisations, NGOs and OIE partner organisations. OIE Member Countries and organisations having an official agreement with the OIE also submit lists of experts for various topics, which are held on file at OIE headquarters. Care is especially taken to not only have a geographical representation within the expert Groups but also a fair balance between academic/research expertise and practical field experience in the application and control of the disease under investigation.

OIE ad hoc Groups may meet once or several times. A few ad hoc Groups, especially those tasked with the evaluation of disease status, meet regularly, once or twice a year, depending on the number of applications received from OIE Member Countries. The composition and terms of reference may change from one meeting to another if needed. In addition to preparing a first draft
text for consideration by the relevant Specialist Commission, they may be re-convened to advise Specialist Commissions on submissions and on draft texts submitted by Member Countries.

The members of ad hoc Groups are nominated on the basis of excellence and geographical balance by the Director General, who takes into account any recommendations that the relevant Specialist Commission and OIE Member Countries may have provided, in addition to ensuring that participants are drawn from all five OIE regions whenever achievable. Members of Specialist Commissions and Working Groups may participate as observers in ad hoc Groups to facilitate communication between these Groups and the relevant Commission.

The terms of reference of ad hoc Groups are decided by the Director General in consultation with the President of the relevant Specialist Commission, taking into account the requests of Members, the opinion and advice of relevant Specialist Commissions and, as appropriate, Working Groups.

Reports of ad hoc Groups, including draft standards, reflect a consensual position of all members of the Group. Where scientific uncertainty results in differences of opinion on the appropriate means to manage risk, options to address uncertainties are fully documented in the Group’s report.

The membership and terms of reference of ad hoc Groups are included in their reports, which are provided by the Director General to OIE Member Countries with the report of the Specialist Commissions to which the relevant Group report. Working Groups and ad hoc Groups have no final decision-making mandate other than to report their recommendations to the relevant Specialist Commission for a final decision. The Specialist Commission have the mandate to accept or reject recommendations of Working Groups or ad hoc Groups.

4.4.4 **OIE Experts and OIE Reference Centres**

The main source of OIE experts is the OIE-designated Reference Centres, comprising Reference Laboratories and Collaborating Centres, which number more than 270 institutes globally. The OIE thus have a vast source of expertise to call upon in the event of the revision of standards. Each OIE Reference Laboratory has an OIE-designated expert whose competence on a specific pathogen/disease is recognised internationally. Collaborating Centres of the OIE offer experts in specific fields. The OIE also calls on institutes other than OIE Reference Centres as necessary.
The experts serving as members of the OIE Specialist Commissions, Working Groups and ad hoc Groups act in their personal capacity as independent scientists, not as representatives of a country or an organisation, to serve the overall interest of the OIE and its Member Countries. Upon appointment, they are required to sign a Confidentiality Undertaking and submit a declaration of interest, in accordance with the relevant rules of the OIE, to ensure proper management of transparency and potential conflict of interest and to assure the impartiality, objectivity and scientific integrity of the OIE's work. The same requirements apply to all experts, regardless of the specific mission or task. The rules governing confidentiality and conflict of interest are set out by the Director General in conformity with the provisions in the Basic Texts and as agreed with the OIE Council.

The experts from OIE Reference Centres are requested to respect confidentiality of information and refrain from engaging in any work that might compromise or generate conflict with the mandate of OIE Reference Centre, including in relation to standard setting.

4.4.5 OIE Member Countries and Delegates
Participation in the process of development and adoption of OIE standards is a prime responsibility of each OIE Member Country, as defined in the OIE Organic Rules. This activity is coordinated through the national Delegate, who is, in most cases, the Head of the national Veterinary Services. The OIE encourages national Delegates to nominate, under their authority, national Focal Points on eight topics (disease notification; animal welfare; animal production food safety; veterinary products; wildlife; aquatic animals; laboratories and communications) to help the Delegate to meet his/her responsibilities, particularly in relation to standard setting. The OIE undertakes capacity building to support Delegates and nominated focal points, including by the regular conduct of seminars on the OIE and its standard setting procedures.

The support by national Focal Points to the designated OIE Delegate of a Member Country becomes of special and utmost importance when the reports of the Specialist Commissions are distributed to Delegates after the February/March and September meetings of the relevant Specialist Commissions asking for comments on proposed new or amended standards. Delegates should then consult with their national Focal Points as well as other policy advisors to ensure that not only are they able to provide written comments within the specified period to the OIE on proposed new or amended standards but also to help the Delegate to prepare verbal interventions on these proposed
or amended standards during the General Assembly if necessary. Delegates are strongly encouraged to consult experts, industry groups and stakeholder’ organisations within their countries wishing to participate in the process of standards development or who have a direct interest in the standards to be proposed for adoption. In practice, it is suggested to countries to share proposed new code chapters and other documents for comments, with all stakeholders concerned, as soon as they are received by the delegates, and to organize a national consultation later on (meeting or electronic consultation), to receive and consolidate the stakeholders’ feedback into a national position. However, in important aspect that is often neglected by Delegates is that as much as they are reliant on inputs from various governmental and non-governmental groups to comment on and assist them to prepare comments on proposed or amended OIE standards prior to the General Assembly, they also have an obligation to report back to these input sources after the World Assembly on the outcome of the standard setting process during the General Assembly.

4.4.6 OIE headquarters
OIE headquarters staff is responsible to ensure that the Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes are kept up to date on an on-going basis. Non-significant revisions, including modifications to ensure consistency of chapters within the Codes, and harmonisation between the Aquatic Code and the Terrestrial Code are undertaken by the OIE International Trade Department in liaison with the responsible Commission. When a proposal is made to develop a new standard or to significantly revise an existing standard, the Director General of the OIE decides how the work will be managed, with reference to the terms of reference of the four OIE Specialist Commissions and the human resources at OIE headquarters.

The Director General of the OIE decides the terms of reference and membership of ad hoc Groups convened to prepare draft texts on specific topics. In taking this decision, he takes into account any opinions of relevant Specialist Commissions and the comments of OIE Members as appropriate. OIE Member Countries are informed of these matters at the annual General Assembly. Ad hoc Groups may address specific diseases or ‘horizontal issues’ (relating to diseases in general; or to cross cutting themes). When convening Working Groups (of which the membership is endorsed by the World Assembly) and ad hoc Groups, the Director General seeks experts with internationally recognised knowledge of the topic and to obtain the broadest regional representation.
The Director General may request that a ‘supporting document’ be drafted by an expert, usually an official from an OIE Reference Centre. Supporting documents contain the latest scientific information relevant to the topic, e.g. relating to infective period, host distribution, transmission mechanisms, diagnostic methods, treatment and control. They are a valuable resource for ad hoc Groups and Working Groups and key scientific references for OIE Member Countries.

The Director General forwards the reports of Working Groups and ad hoc Groups to relevant Specialist Commissions for further consideration.

Each ad hoc Group, Working Group and Specialist Commission receives logistic and secretariat support from staff at OIE headquarters. To facilitate consistency in the drafting of texts intended for adoption in the Codes and Manuals, Groups may consult a guidance document prepared by OIE headquarters. All experts and members of ad hoc Groups, Working Groups and Specialist Commissions must sign a declaration attesting to confidentiality and to the absence of conflict of interest.

According to the OIE Staff Regulations approved by the World Assembly, all headquarters staff is obliged to be impartial and to respect the confidentiality of information provided by Members.

4.4.7 AU-IBAR
Observations and evaluations of OIE General Assemblies prior to 2009 on the participation and interventions by OIE Delegates from African countries indicated:
- a low participation of Africa in OIE standards setting such as a low number of written and verbal comments on draft or amended standards;
- a lack of a coordinated and a common position amongst African nations to propose draft standards, submission of written comments on proposed drafts, or suggestions for revision of standards;
- a lack of opportunity during the meetings of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa to debate standards or establish a common approach and understanding and
- a strong need expressed by OIE Delegates to meet, out of the OIE institutional context, to discuss and harmonise views and their position.

The African Union (AU) and specifically the Interafrican Bureau for Animal Resources (IBAR) of the AU launched an initiative during 2009 under the EU
funded Participation of African Nations in Sanitary and Phytosanitary Standard Setting Organizations Project (PANSPSO) to assist the 52 African Member Countries of the OIE to prepare their interventions to enable the presentation of a common position for African Countries during the OIE General Assembly in May each year on proposed new or amended OIE standards. This initiative resulted in the submission of written comments on the proposed new or amended standards for the February and September commission meetings and the formulation of verbal interventions by African Delegates during the OIE General Assembly. A Technical Committee was established to prepare the written and verbal interventions which were discussed in detail with all the Delegates at a meeting prior to the OIE General Assembly to reach a consensus opinion on a common position for Africa. This initiative has not only resulted in the voice of Africa to be clearly heard during the General Assembly (compared to little or no comment in the preceding years) but also to establish alliances with for example the European Union to elicit support on matters important to Africa to ensure that proposed or amended standards take the needs and often unique circumstances of Africa into consideration. These meetings also created an opportunity for IBAR to exercise its mandate to strengthen the livestock sub-sector in Africa.

Participation of Member Countries to this initiative is critical and does not require massive time and resources. Delegates should at least participate physically in the continental CVOs meeting organized by AU-IBAR in April-May each year, and in the electronic consultation for preparation of written comments, which usually takes place in July and December-January each year.

4.5 Standard setting process in summary
The OIE procedures provide a basis for rapidity, responsiveness, scientific rigour and transparency in the development of standards. Key aspects relating to transparency are:

• Standards are drafted by independent experts drawn from different OIE regions and selected on the basis of scientific excellence and geographical balance. Mechanisms are in place to ensure the neutrality and scientific integrity of experts appointed to work with the OIE.
• All reports of ad hoc Groups are reviewed by Specialist Commissions, comprising elected members, and, as appropriate, by Working Groups. These reviews particularly consider the risk management options proposed.
• Reports of Specialist Commissions, Working Groups and ad hoc Groups are made available to Members and the public via publication on the OIE website.
- OIE Member Countries have scheduled opportunities to comment on draft standards.
- Member Country comments are reviewed by the Specialist Commissions, which advise Delegates of their analysis and decisions on these comments by report on the OIE website.
- All standards are adopted by the World Assembly, usually by consensus or, in rare cases, by a two thirds majority vote.
- Each one of the 178 OIE Member Countries has an equal voice in the development and adoption of standards and each has a responsibility to engage with the OIE and their stakeholders within their countries in this important work.

**The OIE Standard Setting Cycle**

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4.6 **Guidance on the use of the OIE Terrestrial Code**

Member Countries in Africa in general make more use of the OIE Terrestrial Code than any other standard setting document of the OIE. It is therefore essential that not only Delegates, but also officials involved in policy setting, import and export control as well as national Focal Points, have a clear understanding on how to use the Code. A brief guideline is provided below to assist Member Countries to best make use of the information provided in the Terrestrial Animal Health Code – both to consult as guidance when
determining import sanitary conditions and how to best apply good veterinary governance and deliver good veterinary services.

4.6.1. Introduction

1. The OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code sets out standards for the improvement of terrestrial animal health and welfare and veterinary public health worldwide. The printed version of Code comprises two Volumes with different Sections within each Volume. Volume 1 contains the so-called “horizontal” standards while Volume 2 is dedicated to chapters on OIE listed diseases for terrestrial animals.

2. The standards in the Terrestrial Code should be used by the Veterinary Authorities of Member Countries to set up measures providing for early detection, reporting and control of pathogenic agents, including zoonotic, in terrestrial animals (mammals, birds and bees) and preventing their spread via international trade in animals and animal products, while avoiding unjustified sanitary barriers to trade.

3. Correctly applied, the OIE standards provide for animal production and trade in animals and animal products to take place with an optimal level of animal and veterinary public health safety, based on the most recent scientific information and available techniques.

4. Following the adoption of new or amended standards at a particular General Session, the Web version of the Terrestrial and Aquatic Codes are updated on the website and then becomes official. For the Biological Standards Manual, new versions of the Manual are only printed every 4 years and the web version thus has preference as the updated version. The terrestrial and Aquatic Codes are printed each year following the General Session.

4.6.2. Terrestrial Code content

1. Key terms and expressions used more than once in the Terrestrial Code are defined in the Glossary. When reading and using the Terrestrial Code, the Veterinary Authorities of Member Countries should be aware of the definitions given in the Glossary. Defined terms appear in italics. In the on-line version of the Terrestrial Code, a hyperlink leads to the relevant definition.

2. The term ‘(under study)’ is found in some rare instances, with reference to an article or part of an article. This means that this part of the text has not yet been adopted by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates and the particular provisions are thus not yet part of the Terrestrial Code.

3. The standards in the chapters of Section 1 of the Terrestrial Code are designed for the implementation of measures for the diagnosis, surveillance
and notification of pathogenic agents, including procedures for notification to the OIE, tests for international trade, and procedures for the assessment of the health status of a country or zone.

4. The standards in the chapters of Section 2 of the Terrestrial Code are designed for conducting import risk analysis used by an importing country in the absence of OIE trade standards or to justify import measures more stringent than existing OIE trade standards.

5. The standards in the chapters of Section 3 of the Terrestrial Code are designed for the establishment, maintenance and evaluation of quality Veterinary Services, including veterinary legislation. These standards are to assist the Veterinary Services of OIE Member Countries to meet their objectives of improving terrestrial animal health and welfare and veterinary public health, as well as to establish and maintain confidence in their international veterinary certificates.

6. The standards in the chapters of Section 4 of the Terrestrial Code are designed for the implementation of measures for the prevention and control of pathogenic agents, including through animal identification, traceability, zoning, and compartmentalisation, disposal of dead animals, disinfection, disinsectisation and general hygiene precautions. Some chapters address the specific sanitary measures to be applied for the collection and processing of semen and embryos of animals.

7. The standards in the chapters of Section 5 of the Terrestrial Code are designed for the implementation of general sanitary measures for trade, in particular veterinary certification and the measures applicable by the exporting, transit and importing countries, especially Members of the World Trade Organization (WTO). It also includes a range of model veterinary certificates to be used as a harmonised basis for international trade.

8. The standards in the chapters of Section 6 of the Terrestrial Code are designed for the implementation of preventive measures in animal production systems, to assist OIE Member Countries in meeting their veterinary public health objectives. This includes ante- and port-mortem inspection, control of hazards in feed, biosecurity at the animal production level, and the control of antimicrobial resistance in animals.

9. The standards in the chapters of Section 7 of the Terrestrial Code are designed for the implementation of animal welfare measures, including those at the level of production, transport, and slaughter or killing. Additional standards address the animal welfare aspects of stray dog population control and the use of animals in research and education.

10. The standards in each of the chapters of Sections 8 to 15 of the Terrestrial Code are designed to prevent the agents of OIE listed diseases, infections
or infestations from being introduced into an importing country, taking into account the nature of the traded commodity, the animal health status of the exporting country, zone or compartment, and the risk reduction measures applicable to each commodity. These standards assume that the agent is either not present in the importing country or is the subject of a control or eradication programme. Sections 8 to 15 each relate to the host species of the pathogenic agent: multiple species or single species of the families apidae, aves, bovidae, equidae, leporidae, caprinae and suidae. Some chapters include specific measures to prevent and control the infections of global concern. Although the OIE aims to include a chapter for each OIE listed disease, not all OIE listed diseases have been covered yet by a specific chapter. This is work in progress, depending on available scientific knowledge and the priorities set by the World Assembly.

4.6.3. Specific issues

4.6.3.1 Notification of disease outbreaks
Chapter 1.1. describes Member Countries’ obligations under the OIE Organic Statutes. Although only listed and emerging diseases, as prescribed in Chapter 1.1., are compulsorily notifiable, Member Countries are encouraged to provide information to the OIE on any animal health event of epidemiological significance.

Chapter 1.2. describes the criteria for the inclusion of a disease, infection or infestation in the OIE List and gives the updated list. Diseases are divided into nine categories, depending of the host species of the agents.

4.6.3.2 Diagnostic tests and vaccines
The use of specified diagnostic tests and vaccines in Terrestrial Code chapters is recommended with a reference to the relevant section in the OIE Manual of Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals (hereafter referred to as the Terrestrial Manual). Chapter 1.3. provides a table summarising the recommended diagnostic tests for OIE listed diseases. Facilities responsible for disease diagnosis and vaccine production should be fully conversant with the standards in the Terrestrial Manual.

4.6.3.3 Prevention and control
Chapters 4.5. to 4.11. describe the measures which should be implemented during collection and processing of semen and embryos of animals, including micromanipulation and cloning, in order to prevent animal health risks, especially
when trading these commodities. Although this relates principally to OIE listed diseases or infections, general standards apply to all health risks. Moreover, in Chapter 4.7, diseases that are not listed diseases are mentioned for the information of OIE Member Countries.

Chapter 4.14 addresses the specific issue of the control of bee diseases and some of its trade implications. This chapter should be read in conjunction with the specific bee disease chapters in Section 9.

Chapter 6.4 is designed for the implementation of general biosecurity measures in intensive poultry production, whereas Chapter 6.5 gives an example of a specific on-farm prevention and control plan for the non-listed food borne pathogen Salmonella in poultry, including standards for introduction of live poultry and hatching eggs.

Chapter 6.11 deals specifically with the zoonotic risk associated with the movements of non-human primates and gives standards for certification, transportation and import conditions of these animals.

4.6.3.4 Trade requirements
An OIE Member Country may authorise the importation of animals or animal products into its territory under conditions more or less restrictive than those recommended by the Terrestrial Code. However, where the conditions are more restrictive, they should be scientifically justified by a risk analysis conducted in accordance with OIE standards, as described in Chapter 2.1. For Members of the WTO to meet their obligations under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), international trade animal health measures should be based on an OIE standard or an import risk analysis.

Chapters 5.1 to 5.3 describe the obligations and ethics in international trade. Veterinary Authorities and all veterinarians directly involved in international trade should be familiar with these chapters, which also provide guidance for informal mediation by the OIE.

The OIE aims to include, at the beginning of each chapter relating to a specific agent in Sections 8 to 15, an article listing the commodities that are considered safe for trade regardless of the status of the country or zone for the agent in question. This is a work in progress and some chapters do not yet contain articles listing safe commodities. Where such a list is present, there should be
no trade restrictions applied to the listed commodity in relation to the agent in question.

4.6.3.5 **International veterinary certificates**

An international veterinary certificate is an official document drawn up by the Veterinary Authority of an exporting country in accordance with Chapter 5.1. and Chapter 5.2., describing the animal health requirements and, where appropriate, public health requirements for the exported commodity. The quality of the exporting country’s Veterinary Services, including the ethical approach to the provision of veterinary certificates and their history in meeting their notification obligations, is essential in providing assurance to trading partners regarding the safety of exported animals and products.

International veterinary certificates underpin international trade and provide assurances to the importing country regarding the health status of the animals and products imported. The measures prescribed should take into account the health status of both exporting and importing countries and be based upon the standards in the Terrestrial Code.

The following steps should be taken when drafting international veterinary certificates:

a. List the diseases for which the importing country is justified in seeking protection in regards to its own disease status. Importing countries should not impose measures in regards to diseases that occur in their own territory but are not subject to official control or eradication programmes;

b. For commodities capable of transmitting these diseases through international trade, the importing country should apply the articles addressing the commodity in question in the relevant disease specific chapters, adapted to the disease status of the exporting country, zone or compartment. Such status should be established according to the articles of the relevant disease chapter, or to Chapter 1.4. when there are no such articles.

c. When preparing international veterinary certificates, the importing country should endeavour to use terms and expressions in accordance with the definitions given in the Glossary. As stated in Article 5.2.2., international veterinary certificates should be kept as simple as possible and should be clearly worded, to avoid misunderstanding of the importing country’s requirements.

d. Chapters 5.10. to 5.12. contain model certificates as a further guidance to Member Countries and should be used as a baseline.
4.6.3.6 Guidance notes for importers and exporters

To provide a clear understanding of trade requirements, it is advisable that Veterinary Authorities of OIE Member Countries prepare ‘guidance notes’ to assist importers and exporters. These notes should identify and explain the trade conditions, including the measures to be applied before and after export, during transport and unloading, relevant legal obligations and operational procedures. Exporters should also be reminded of the International Air Transport Association rules governing air transport of animals and animal products. The guidance notes should advise on all details to be included in the health certification accompanying the consignment to its destination.

4.7 The outlay of the Terrestrial Animal Health Code in Volume 2: Disease specific chapters

To better understand the interpretation of the disease specific chapters, it is usually helpful to know how these chapters are in general formalised. It is also important to remember to never interpret a disease specific chapter in isolation but to take cognisance of the requirements related to that disease specific chapter described in other horizontal chapters. For example, if a chapter does not describe specific surveillance guidelines for a disease, the surveillance guidelines in Chapter 1.4 apply and should be read in conjunction with a disease specific chapter.

1. The Terrestrial Code is not a textbook on animal diseases. Rather, it provides standards, guidelines and recommendations on OIE listed diseases for the purpose of disease control, criteria for recognising, obtaining and maintenance of disease freedom, and criteria for safe trade in animals and animal products (‘commodities’).

2. The standards and guidelines are based on the most recent scientific knowledge available. The scientific rationale is not included in the Code but rather is presented in the reports of ad hoc Groups and reports of the Scientific Commission and Code Commission meetings.

3. The standards and guidelines provide measures to reduce risk to an acceptable level – in other words, these are international standards based on risk analysis.

4. Some but not all disease chapters contain extensive information, including on disease surveillance, risk assessment and pathogen inactivation. The diseases for which the OIE provides official recognition of disease status contain this type of extended information, as well as some other disease chapters (e.g. avian influenza).

5. A disease chapter takes into consideration, and should always be consulted together with, other relevant chapters in the Code, especially the so-called
‘horizontal’ chapters which deal with relevant aspects, such as import risk analysis, quality and evaluation of veterinary services, disease surveillance, and zoning and compartmentalisation.

6. The requirements for diagnostic tests and vaccines are cross-referenced to the OIE Manual for Diagnostic Tests and Vaccines for Terrestrial Animals (if such tests have been approved by the Biological Standards Commission) rather than being repeated within the text of the Terrestrial Code.

7. Where terms are defined in the Glossary of the Terrestrial Code, these definitions are italicised within the text of chapters to indicate that it an adopted definition or standard and need not to be redefined again.

The term ‘must’ is not used in the Code but rather ‘should’ or ‘should always’, for emphasis) is preferred (e.g. “Members should apply the standards in the Terrestrial Code”). English grammar and spelling is that used in the United Kingdom (rather than the United States). The authority for spelling is the Oxford English Dictionary.

4.7.1 What is OIE listed diseases?

Resolutions passed by the General Assembly and recommendations issued by the Regional Commissions instructed the OIE to establish a single OIE list of notifiable terrestrial and aquatic animal diseases to replace the former Lists A and B. The aim in drawing up a single list was to be in line with the terminology of the Sanitary and Phytosanitary Agreement of the World Trade Organization, by classifying diseases as specific hazards and giving all listed diseases the same degree of importance in international trade.

Naturally not all animal diseases pose a trade threat or are zoonotic or pose a threat for international spread. To create a single list of notifiable diseases, the OIE therefore defined criteria to examine the inclusion or not of a given disease in the OIE single list that were approved in May 2004 (terrestrial animal diseases - aquatic animal diseases).

In 2005, the first single list composed of former lists A and B was used, and in the same year, an ad hoc Group on disease and pathogenic agents notification was organized to examine diseases according to the adopted criteria for listing diseases, and proposed a new list of diseases meeting the criteria that entered into force in 2006. The criteria for listing disease were again revised in 2011 and presented for adoption to the General Assembly in 2012.
The list is reviewed on a regular basis and in case of modifications adopted by the World Assembly of Delegates at its annual General Assembly; the new list comes into force on 1 January of the following year.

The objective of listing is to support Members’ efforts to prevent the transboundary spread of important animal diseases, including zoonoses, through transparent and consistent reporting. Each listed disease, but not all listed diseases, normally has a corresponding chapter to assist Member Countries in the harmonisation of disease detection, prevention and control. Requirements for notification are detailed in Chapter 1.1. and notifications are to be made through WAHIS or, if not possible, by fax or e-mail as described in Article 1.1.3.

The criteria for the inclusion of a disease, infection or infestation in the OIE List take into consideration that the international spread of the agent (via live animals, their products or fomites) has been proven; evidence that at least one country has demonstrated freedom or impending freedom from the disease, infection or infestation in populations of susceptible animals, based on the animal health surveillance provisions of the Terrestrial Code, in particular those contained in Chapter and that natural transmission to humans has been proven, and human infection is associated with severe consequences or that the disease has been shown to cause significant morbidity or mortality in domestic animals at the level of a country or a zone or that the disease has been shown to, or scientific evidence indicates that it would, cause significant morbidity or mortality in wild animal populations and a reliable means of detection and diagnosis exists and a precise case definition is available to clearly identify cases and allow them to be distinguished from other diseases, infections and infestations. Evidence should also be provided where appropriate that the disease or infection is an emerging disease with evidence of zoonotic properties, rapid spread, or significant morbidity or mortality and a case definition is available to clearly identify cases and allow them to be distinguished from other diseases or infections.

The OIE applies caution in including a list under the Listed diseases as it may imply trade restrictions and has the potential to be used by Member Countries as a trade restrictive measure. The approach to listed diseases should be still to assess the risk posed by possible introduction against the risk mitigation measures provided in the Code. If a chapter for a listed disease is not yet in the Code, Member Countries should also consult the OIE Manual or apply the principles for import risk analysis described in the Code.
4.7.2 Article 1 on general provisions

1. In this introductory Article of most disease chapters it is stated ‘for the purposes of the Terrestrial Code’, or for the purpose of international trade the infective period, the animal species to which the requirements of the chapter apply and, if scientifically proven, the geographical distribution of the disease at the time of drafting the chapter. If the distribution is global, geographical distribution is not mentioned. The incubation period often described in the introductory Article is not identical to the scientifically described incubation period in textbooks but rather provides for the incubation period x2 to make provision for the most acceptable period of quarantine to mitigate the risk of disease introduction or spread post quarantine.

2. This article also provides a case definition for the disease such as for foot and mouth disease, Classical swine fever, etc.

3. The Article includes references to diagnostic tests and vaccines if described in the Manual.

4.7.3 Article 2 on safe commodities

1. Based on scientific evidence, commodities are listed that can be traded without restriction, regardless of the disease status of the source country or zone. This listing contains, for each commodity, the conditions that apply for the commodity to be considered as safe (e.g. meat from animals that have passed ante and post mortem as specified in Chapter 6.2., embryos collected according to the standards in Chapter 4.7).

If no specific conditions apply (e.g. milk and milk products in Chapter 11.6 BSE), no reference to conditions need be made.

2. The following commodities are where appropriate, considered for inclusion in this article:
   • Live animals;
   • Genetic material i.e. semen and embryos/oocytes;
   • Milk and milk products;
   • Meat and meat products (note: ‘meat’ is defined in the Glossary as ‘all edible parts of an animal’. Sometimes it is necessary to provide more specification, as in Chapter 11.6. ‘deboned skeletal muscle meat (etc.)’;
   • Hides and skins;
   • Wool and fibre;
   • Other products/commodities could be included as appropriate to the pathogenesis of the disease.
4.7.4 Articles on disease status

These articles provide the requirements for recognition of freedom from disease of countries, zones and compartments, as appropriate, and where applicable, to the recovery of free status.

Each article usually contains a description of the requirements in the following order:
1. Requirements for country freedom
2. Requirements for zone and compartment (if appropriate) freedom
3. Where appropriate the above categories are divided into ‘freedom without vaccination’ and ‘freedom with vaccination’ if applicable (e.g. in Chapter 8.5 foot and mouth disease)
4. If applicable, an infected country or zone is described
5. Requirements are also provided for recovery of disease free status after a previous free country or zone has become infected for example foot and mouth disease.

4.7.5 Articles on recommendations for importation of animals and animal products.

These articles describe the measures required for safe trade in
1. Live animal of the species susceptible to the disease and
2. Commodities of these species or group of species. The articles address: commodities, species, risk mitigation measures and importation from countries, zones or compartments that are
• free without vaccination and
• free with vaccination. Requirements, including applicable time periods (e.g. animals resident in the country or zone for at least 3 months) must be scientifically justified. The spirit of the WTO-SPS Agreement is respected, i.e. it is ensured that the proposed measures should be the ‘least trade restrictive’ necessary to protect animal health and, where applicable, human health.

4.7.6 Articles on inactivation of the pathogen

These articles describe the procedures for the inactivation of the pathogen in commodities or relevant articles, based on a scientific rationale. The commodity in question e.g. ‘provisions to inactivate the agent in meat’; ‘provisions to inactivate the agent in manure’ are specified.
4.7.7 Articles on disease surveillance

These articles describe the procedures for disease surveillance, based on a scientific rationale. If specific provisions cannot be provided, by convention the requirements in Section 1 ‘Animal Disease diagnosis, surveillance and notification’ (Chapter 1.4) apply.

5. Requirements of the Terrestrial Code for disease status recognition

In May 1994, the World Assembly of Delegates of the OIE requested the Foot and Mouth Disease and Other Epizootics Commission (re-named later as Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases) to develop a procedure for the official recognition by the OIE of the foot and mouth disease (FMD) free status of Member Countries. The procedure has since then been expanded to include the official recognition of disease status for rinderpest, African horse sickness (AHS), classical swine fever (CSF), contagious bovine pleuropneumonia (CBPP), peste des petits ruminants (PPR) and bovine spongiform encephalopathy (BSE) risk status as well as the endorsement of official control programmes for FMD and PPR. The endorsement of official national control programs for FMD and PPR is not a status recognition but an official endorsement by the OIE of the program implemented in a Member Country to control that disease and to eventually achieve freedom and official status recognition. Official disease status recognition for rinderpest was terminated in 2011 when the world was officially declared free from rinderpest.

The official recognition of disease status of Member Countries is of great significance for international trade and constitutes one of the most important legal links between the OIE and World Trade Organization (WTO), in the framework of the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (SPS Agreement), which entered into force in 1995. In 1998, the official agreement between WTO and the OIE further confirmed the OIE’s mandate to recognise disease-and pest-free areas based on the SPS Agreement. A country may either lose or enhance its commercial attractiveness in the eyes of potential or existing importing partners, depending on official recognition of its disease status. By acquiring and maintaining its official status, a country also demonstrates transparency and helps to promote animal health and public health worldwide, thereby gaining the trust of its partners and of the international community.

Granting, suspension and recovery of official disease status are handled in an objective and transparent manner, governed by the Standard Operating Procedures for disease status recognition. The procedures for disease status
recognition are described in detail on the OIE website and can be accessed at: http://www.oie.int/animal-health-in-the-world/official-disease-status/official-recognition-policy-and-procedures/

Chapter 1.6 of the Code contains questionnaires which a Member Country should complete if such a Member Country is of the opinion that they comply with the requirements of the specific disease chapter for status recognition and thus wish to be officially assessed by the OIE for a particular disease status of any of the 6 diseases: FMD, BSE, AHS, CBPP, CSF or PPR. The applications are submitted to the OIE accompanied by the prescribed fee. Applications are then pre-screened by the OIE Scientific and Technical Department to assess if the application meets the requirements for submission. The dossier is then submitted to the particular ad hoc Group for assessment who after assessment make recommendations to the Scientific Commission for a final assessment and decision. If the evaluation produces a favourable outcome the decision of the Scientific Commission is circulated 60 days prior to the General Assembly to Member Countries for possible comments. During the General Assembly the recommendations are submitted to the World Assembly of OIE Delegates for adoption and then published on the OIE website in the list of diseases recognised by the OIE for a given disease status.

This democratic and transparent process only applies to the 6 diseases mentioned above and only for recognition of country or zonal disease status. For all other OIE listed diseases countries can do a self-declaration for disease freedom if they are of the opinion that the status of the particular disease, meets the requirement for disease freedom as described in the particular chapter of the Code. The information is then published in the OIE Bulletin but not placed on an official list on the OIE website as the self-declaration of disease freedom is solely on the responsibility of the Member Country concerned without official recognition by the OIE.

Applications for disease free compartments are also not assessed or endorsed by the OIE but are established under mutual agreement between the Veterinary Authority of the Member Country, the industry and the importing country.

When the status of a Member Country is lost due to an outbreak of the disease for which the status was given, the status is officially withdrawn and notified as such on the OIE website. The Scientific Commission has the mandate to re-instate the status of a country without having to submit the request for reinstatement to the General Assembly for adoption. Re-instatement is done
after the disease is successfully contained and the Member Country once again meets the requirements of the Code for status recognition.

The Code also provides for the establishment of containment zones in the event of a limited outbreak of disease in an already free country or zone. The rationale of the establishment of a containment zone is that the Member Country is offered the opportunity to isolate and contain the limited outbreak while the free status of the rest of the country or zone is not affected. Once the disease is successfully contained, the containment zone is remerged into the previous free zone. The Scientific Commission has the mandate to evaluate and approve applications from Member Countries for the establishment of a containment zone without having to wait for approval of the General Assembly.
5 THE WORLD ASSEMBLY OF OIE DELEGATES: HOW TO PREPARE IN ADVANCE AND PARTICIPATE IN THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The OIE Delegate of a Member Country is the sole representative of that country to the OIE and only become the accredited representative after confirmation by the responsible Minister of the Delegate of that status to the Director General of the OIE. As such the Delegate is the only spokesperson to the OIE on issues concerning his or her country and is also the only person that the OIE communicates with on issues pertaining to that Member Country. It is therefore clear that the Delegate when representing his or her country at the General Assembly, should honour this responsibility by being well prepared for attending the General Assembly to not only comment when necessary on issues that might affect his or her country but also to ensure that the opinions that he or she raises during the course of the General Assembly also represents the interest and will of his country and of that of the appropriate commodity Groups within the country – and where appropriate also that of his or her Region.

5.1 Preparing on national level for the General Assembly

The documentation for Delegates who will be attending the General Assembly, are available on the secure OIE website for Delegates well in advance of the meeting. The annual meeting of the World Assembly of Delegates always takes place in Paris, France during the last week of May each year. Documentation already becomes available at the end of March to the middle of April each year. The reports of the Specialist Commissions of their meetings in September and February/beginning of March are dispatched to Delegates within 2 to 3 weeks after the meetings to enable Delegates to prepare well in advance for the meeting.

The recommended and ideal procedure is that the respective national Focal Points and policy advisors, together with other advisers to the Delegate, scrutinise the documents and then in a meeting with the Delegate and his advisors, formulate the Member Country comments to the relevant Specialist Commission. However, to ensure buy-in and cooperation from the animal health industry, it is advisable that they are also given an opportunity to provide inputs when a specific proposed standard might have the potential to have an effect on their sphere of activity.
For comments, if needed, on proposed new or amended text for the Terrestrial Code, it is also important to remember to only comment on proposed new or amended text – not text that was already adopted and not proposed for adoption. New text in an existing chapter of the Code are always double underlined (double underlined) while existing text intended for deletion are indicated as deleted. Member Countries must only comment on the double underlined and deleted text. When a totally new chapter is presented for comments, the text will be “clean” without double underlining or deletions and comments could thus be on the whole chapter.

Delegates have three opportunities for comments (written and verbal) on proposed new or amended standards:
• The first opportunity for comments is after the meeting of the Code Commission in September (written comments must usually submitted before the following January)
• The second opportunity is after the meeting of the Code Commission in February prior to the General Assembly. The report of the Code Commission of this meeting contains text that will be presented for adoption. Member Countries must thus prepare verbal comments if they intend making an intervention during the General Assembly when the report of the Code Commission is presented (written interventions are as a general rule not allowed during the General Assembly – unless to clarify a verbal intervention).
• The third opportunity is after the General Assembly and before the September meetings of the Code and Scientific Commissions (written comments must be submitted to the Code Commission before the end of August).

The most important preparation is for the presentations by the respective Specialist Commissions so that Delegates can attend these sessions well prepared and be well informed what to expect and what to comment on. Equally important are presentations on the Technical Themes presented at each General Assembly on topics of recent interest and concern. The text of these presentations is also made available in advance of the General Assembly to allow Delegates to raise comments on issues concerning their own Region or country.

A further important session for Delegates is the closed session reserved for Delegates only on the last day of the General Assembly (usually held at the OIE Headquarters) where Delegates have to vote on important issues for
the smooth administrative running of the OIE, budgetary proposals as well as election of new members for Specialist Commissions and the OIE Council (every 3 years) and Director General (every 5 years).

During the afternoon of the Monday of the General Assembly there is also always a meeting of the respective OIE Regional Commissions during which time Delegates from a Region (such as Africa) can discuss common problems and consolidate their views on interventions that will be made during the various sessions.

5.2 Establishing a common position for Africa – the role of AU-IBAR

While it is acknowledged and respected that it is the sovereign right of each OIE Member Country in Africa to submit comments to the OIE on proposed new or amended standards on its own, Delegates of Africa have agreed in 2009 to submit all comments to AU-IBAR to consolidate comments to establish a common position for Africa for presentation by designated Delegates of Africa of written comments and verbal interventions to the World Assembly of Delegates in May in Paris. This process has worked extremely well and has significantly strengthened the ability of Africa to elicit support for the adoption or rejection of proposed new or amended standards.

The process to assist African Delegates to actively participate during the General Assembly comprises 5 steps applied each year:

- A technical team of 4 to 5 members which includes the President of the OIE Regional Commission for Africa and other selected Delegates, members of the staff of AU-IBAR and two consultants meets three times a year (April, July and December) to discuss the reports of the Specialist Commissions and prepare written and verbal comments.
- The written comments are prepared on the reports of the Specialist Commissions (Terrestrial, Aquatic and Biological Standards Commissions) during the meetings in July and December and after circulation to all 52 African Delegates the written comments are submitted to the OIE as representing a common position for Africa taking into consideration submissions by individual countries that may differ from the common position proposed.
- The verbal comments for presentation during the OIE General Assembly in May are prepared during a meeting of the Technical committee in April and the proposed interventions are then circulated to the 52 Member Countries for comments.
- Soon after the meeting of the Technical committee, a meeting of all the 52
Delegates are convened by AU-IBAR where the verbal interventions are again discussed in detail and the rationale for the proposed interventions explained and Delegates are offered the opportunity to propose changes or amendments.

- When a consensus opinion is established on the proposed interventions, specific Member Countries are invited to present the intervention on behalf of Africa during the General Assembly. The proposed interventions are given in writing to each Delegate to take it with them to the General Session to enable them to intervene on behalf of Africa to ensure that the comment as agreed upon by all Delegates are conveyed correctly.

It is appreciated and encouraged that similar exercises are undertaken within the different economic communities within Africa such as ECOWAS and SADC but that the proposals for interventions and written comments are forwarded or submitted to AU-IBAR to formulate the final common position for Africa either for written comments or for verbal interventions during the OIE General Assembly.

5.3 Who should attend the General Assembly?
While the designated Delegate of the Member Country represents its country at the General Assembly, it is always helpful (pending on financial restrictions) if the Delegate can be accompanied by one or two advisors to assist the Delegate during the meeting with advice on possible interventions, interpretation of text and reaction on comments made by other Member Countries.

5.4 What happens if the Delegate or the Member Country cannot attend?
The OIE rules do not allow for a proxy system i.e. one Member Country cannot vote or speak on behalf of another country if that Member Country is not present at the meeting. In the event that a Delegate cannot attend, the OIE rules do provide for the Member Country to appoint an accredited substitute Delegate for the purpose of the General Assembly. The nomination of such a temporary accredited Delegate must be done by the responsible Minister of the Member Country and submitted to the OIE for approval prior to the General Assembly.

5.5 What documentation should I bring with me to the General Assembly?
Delegates are provided in advance to the General Assembly of the critical documents such as reports of the Specialist Commissions, the common position

for Africa agreed upon by Delegates during the meeting of CVO’s prior to the General Session; text of the Technical Themes to be presented and the annual report of the Director General to enable them to study these documents in detail. The working documents of the Delegate emanating from the prior screening of these documents that were made available on the OIE Delegate website, would obviously be useful during the different sessions at the General Assembly. However, during registration at the General Assembly, Delegates are provided with a complete set in hard copy of the most important documents while reports of ad hoc and Working Groups and other relevant documentation are provided on an electronic storage device to enable Delegates to study these documents in detail on their own computers.

5.6 The agenda of the General Assembly

The meeting lasts 6 days starting on the Sunday and ending on the Friday. On the Sunday Delegates can register at the conference venue from 10h00 in the morning and attend the opening ceremony in the afternoon where inaugural addresses are given by invited Government representatives, the President of the OIE and honorary awards are presented to 3 outstanding nominees selected by the Council. The meeting is conducted in the 3 official languages of the OIE (French, English and Spanish while on-going translations are available for these 3 languages and several other languages such as German, Russian, Chinese and Arabic.

On the Monday the annual report of the Director General is presented as well as the first Technical Theme while in the afternoon the time is reserved for the meetings of the respective OIE regional commissions.

On Tuesday the second Technical Theme is presented; presentations are given by selected organisations with which the OIE has signed an official cooperation Agreement and the reports of the Aquatic Animal Health Standards Commission and the Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases are presented by the Presidents of these respective Commissions.

On Wednesday the reports of the Terrestrial Animal Health Standards Commission (Code Commission) and the Biological Standards Commission are presented by their respective Presidents.

On the Thursday the report of the Code Commission is continued if not finished on the previous day followed by a presentation and discussion on the animal health status worldwide and discussion and adoption of Resolutions
emanating from presentations by the various Presidents of the Commissions and the Technical Themes.

On the Friday the Administrative session is held at OIE Headquarters which are reserved for permanent Delegates only. During this session the OIE budget is presented and discussed, the report of the auditors are presented and election of members of Specialist Commissions and the Council and a new President (only every 3 years).

In the afternoon of the Friday the draft report of the General Assembly is presented, discussed and adopted.

5.7 **How and when to make interventions**

The important rule is that it is not the number of interventions that are raised but the quality of the interventions made. Member Countries should only intervene if they differ from a proposed standard or if they are of the opinion that the intervention can assist in improving the proposed text or make it more clear and understandable. The time during the General Assembly for long discussions is very limited and it thus help if Delegates are well prepared before attending the General Assembly to enable them to make informed interventions when deemed necessary. The system of prior-approved text for interventions that was introduced in 2009 by AU-IBAR for Delegates from Africa, has greatly assisted in the quality and usefulness of interventions by African Delegates thereby contributing to the improvement of and eventual adoption of proposed or amended standards.
6 ACTIONS TO BE TAKEN BY THE DELEGATE ON RETURN TO THE CAPITAL

During the week of the General Assembly, Delegates are exposed to a substantial amount of information transfer, albeit during the official sessions as well as during informal discussions with Delegates from other Member Countries. Important decisions are taken and Resolutions adopted that have a direct bearing on the governance of the Veterinary Services in the home country of the Delegate. It is thus expected and also very essential that on return, the Delegate should not only give detailed feedback to his staff, policy advisors and other interest Groups but also discuss and plan with them how the Resolutions that were adopted and the decisions taken, will be implemented or might indicate possible changes or amendments to existing national legislation and directives. Members are advised that their participation in the General Assembly or participation in voting can be forfeited if they fail to pay their annual compulsory subscriptions to the OIE. It is this important that subscriptions should be up to date prior to each General Session to enable Members to fully participate in the proceedings.
THE APPLICATION AND IMPLEMENTATION OF OIE STANDARDS

7.1 The relationship between OIE standards and national legislation

OIE standards, guidelines and recommendations are in terms of the SPS Agreement of the WTO, the only reference standards for international trade in animals and animal products. Member Countries of the OIE are by default obliged to respect these standards as they are themselves part to the eventual adoption of these standards for international implementation. While OIE standards are in essence minimum standards and are based on sound risk assessment principles, Member Countries can set higher standards provided such higher standards can be scientifically justified and based on a risk assessment in accordance with the international standards of the OIE for risk assessment. It is thus not only useful but strongly recommended that the essence and sentiment of OIE standards should also be incorporated and reflected in the sanitary requirements of national legislation. By doing so, Member Countries will have an advantage in the event of trade disputes if they can claim and demonstrate that their national legislation and sanitary standards set for import and export control, are based on OIE standards.

7.2 Applying OIE standards in trade disputes

The SPS Agreement and WTO is described in detail a separate AU-IBAR booklet and therefore only a brief summary is provided on the most essential issues related to the Agreement and OIE standards.

7.2.1 The rights and obligations of OIE Member Countries

The entry into force in 1995 of the legal basis creating the World Trade Organization (WTO) established the rules-based system for international trade that applies to WTO Members today. The WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures (the SPS Agreement) specifically recognizes the OIE as the relevant standard-setting body for sanitary measures relating to animal health and zoonoses. The Preamble to the SPS Agreement states “that it is desirable to further the use of harmonized sanitary (…) measures between Members, on the basis of international standards, guidelines and recommendations developed by the relevant international organizations, including (…) the International Office of Epizootics”. The SPS Agreement also refers to the OIE standards in Article 3 on Harmonization, and in Annex A, paragraph 3(b) of the SPS Agreement. In the context of trade in animals and animal products, “sanitary measure” means “a measure, such as those described in various chapters of the Terrestrial Code, destined to protect animal or human
health or life within the territory of the OIE Member from risks arising from the entry, establishment or spread of a hazard”.

The WTO recognises that each Member has the sovereign right to set its appropriate level of protection when applying sanitary measures for international trade. However, WTO Members should respect the provisions in the SPS Agreement when setting these measures. WTO Member countries may comply with their obligations under the SPS Agreement by basing their measures on relevant international standards. If a higher level of protection is required, a risk assessment should be carried out according to the provisions of Article 5 of the SPS Agreement and taking into account the risk assessment techniques developed by the relevant international organizations.

The OIE standards on the import risk assessment are described in Chapter 2.1. of the OIE Terrestrial Code and Chapter 2.2 of the OIE Aquatic Code. The standards in the Codes are designed to facilitate safe international trade. The Codes are reference documents for use by veterinary authorities, aquatic animal health authorities, those responsible for making decisions on the import and export of animals and their products, and all those involved in international trade. Correctly applied, OIE standards provide for trade in animals and animal products to take place with an optimal level of animal health security, based on the most up to date scientific information and available techniques. The application of the OIE standards is the best means of avoiding disagreements, disputes and other problems in international trade. Furthermore, OIE experts are often asked to provide scientific advice to WTO Panels regarding OIE standards that are relevant to disputes under the WTO SPS Agreement.

7.2.2 Responsibilities of importing and exporting countries

The responsibilities of importing and exporting countries are set out in Chapter 5.1 of the Terrestrial Code and Chapter 5.1 of the Aquatic Code. The World Animal Health Information Database (WAHID), accessible on the OIE Website contains a comprehensive range of data relevant to assessment of risk and decision making on health measures, including the following:

- immediate notifications submitted by Member Countries
- follow-up reports submitted by Member Countries;
- six-monthly reports describing the situation for the OIE-listed diseases;
- annual reports providing information on animal health, veterinary services etc.

Using data in WAHID, the sanitary situation of the importing and exporting country can be compared for the purpose of establishing conditions of trade.
7.2.3  Responsibilities of importing countries

As stated in the WTO SPS Agreement, an importing country has the right to choose its appropriate level of protection in relation to animal and plant health and food safety. Importing countries should not impose measures in relation to diseases or pathogens that are not listed by the OIE, unless the non-listed disease or pathogen has been identified as presenting a significant risk on the basis of an import risk analysis conducted according to OIE recommendations.

The recommendations in the Codes focus on the animal health situation in the exporting country, and assume that the disease is not present in the importing country or, if present, that the disease is the subject of official control programmes. Importing countries should not impose sanitary measures for diseases or pathogens that occur in the importing country unless they are the subject of official controls and, in this case, the measures applied to imports should be no stricter than the official controls applied to similar animals/animal products in the country.

An OIE Member may authorise the importation of animals or animal products into its territory under conditions more or less stringent than those recommended in the Codes. Where the conditions are more restrictive, they should be based on a scientific risk assessment, taking into account OIE standards. Importing countries should publish a list of their border posts for imported animals and animal products. This information helps exporting countries to make arrangements for the consignment of shipments and thus facilitates international trade.

7.2.4  Responsibilities of exporting countries

At the request of importing countries, exporting countries should provide the following information, to enable trading partners to verify exporting country claims regarding the national health status and, as appropriate, the existence of specific disease free zones or compartments:

- the animal health situation, including regular and prompt updates on the occurrence of notifiable diseases;
- national animal health information systems, including the legislative framework, programmes and procedures in force;
- the country’s ability to apply measures to prevent and control relevant listed diseases;
information on the structure of the Veterinary Services/Aquatic Animal Health Services and the authority that they exercise, as outlined in Chapters 3.1. and 3.2. of the Terrestrial Code and Chapter 3.1. of the Aquatic Code; 

• technical information, particularly on biological tests and vaccines applied in all or part of the national territory.

Consignments of animals and some animal products are normally inspected before export by an official veterinarian (or a private veterinarian holding an appropriate official delegation). The veterinarian issues a veterinary health certificate according to the arrangements agreed between the Veterinary Authorities of the exporting and importing country. The OIE provides certification models and Member Countries are encouraged to use these as the basis for trade. The Veterinary Authority of the exporting country is ultimately accountable for veterinary certification used in international trade.

Based on Terrestrial Code Article 5.1.3., Veterinary Authorities of exporting countries should:

• have official procedures for authorisation of certifying veterinarians, defining their functions and duties and the conditions of oversight and accountability, including procedures for suspension and termination of authorisation;

• ensure that the relevant instructions and training are provided to certifying veterinarians;

• monitor the activities of certifying veterinarians to verify their integrity and impartiality.

At the request of the importing country, the exporting country should supply information on export consignments, including:

• estimated date of entry into the territory of the importing country;

• animal species;

• quantity;

• means of transport; and

• border post in the importing country where the consignment will arrive.

Compliance with these recommendations helps to assure safe international trade.

7.2.5  SPS Principles and OIE standards to facilitate safe trade

The SPS Agreement is premised on the use of science and risk assessment, as well as harmonisation with relevant international standards, as the basis for the development of sanitary and phytosanitary measures. In addition, the Agreement
contains several key concepts that, when put into practice, help to facilitate safe international trade. The OIE standards, which give full expression to these SPS concepts, are regularly updated and benefit from scientific research and risk analyses conducted by Member countries.

7.2.6 Equivalence
The concept in SPS Agreement Article 4 of “equivalence” as applied to sanitary measures refers to the acceptance by an importing country that the measure(s) proposed by an exporting country achieves the appropriate level of protection required by the importing country, even though the measures may be different to those applied by the importing country. To support a decision by an importing country to base health conditions on the existence of a disease free zone or compartment in an exporting country, the latter must be able to demonstrate that it has complied with the relevant OIE standards. Detailed documentation should be provided by the exporting country for review by the importing country with a view to the establishment of appropriate health measures and certification provisions.

The outcome of a request for recognition of a zone or compartment depends on the importing country’s veterinary authority having confidence in the exporting country’s veterinary services and the procedures used to maintain the health status of the defined sub population. The findings, endorsed by the beneficiary country of an OIE PVS Evaluation and any subsequent missions, should be taken into account in considering a request for recognition of a zone or compartment.

The import risk analysis should take into account the quality of the Veterinary Services of the exporting country and in particular the results, endorsed by the beneficiary country, of any OIE PVS evaluation conducted. The use of zoning and compartmentalisation by the exporting country should also be addressed, as appropriate. The OIE standards, guidelines and recommendations are updated annually, taking account of scientific research and developments in knowledge. This process benefits from the increasing number of Member countries conducting import risk analyses, the results of which provide a valuable input to the OIE standards. The on-going updating and publication of OIE standards particularly on animal diseases provides Members and stakeholders with the tools and information needed to conduct risk analyses in accordance with the provisions of the WTO SPS Agreement.
When authorising the importation of designated safe commodities and products made from them, importing countries should not impose health measures for the disease in question, regardless of the status of the exporting country, zone or compartment for that disease. In the Aquatic Code, Article 5.3.2., the concept of ‘consumer ready products’ has been used as a basis for determining the safety of aquatic products for the purpose of international trade. Such products are prepared and packaged for retail trade and intended for human consumption. Their safety, in terms of animal disease risk, depends on the minimal risk presented by waste material i.e. the residue of the product that is not consumed.

7.2.7 Resolving differences and formal disputes relating to international trade

7.2.7.1 The WTO Framework

The WTO framework includes informal and formal procedures for addressing disputes. WTO Members may raise concerns about the SPS measures applied by other Members under a specific standing item on the agenda of SPS Committee meetings. Frequently, this concerns a situation where a WTO Member considers that an importing country has not complied with a relevant international standard or has not based an import measure on scientific evidence or, as appropriate, a risk assessment. This informal procedure provides for discussion of trade concerns in the context of international standards and, frequently, acts as a trigger for bilateral discussions, which may be successful in resolving a specific trade problem. If this step proves insufficient to resolve the matter, the parties may request a meeting with the Chair of the SPS Committee, under the ‘Good Offices of the Chair’. Using these procedures can help WTO Members to find a mutually agreed solution to SPS-related trade problems without initiating a formal dispute.

The WTO formal dispute settlement mechanism, under the auspices of the WTO Dispute Settlement Body (DSB), covers trade disputes under the various WTO Agreements, including the SPS Agreement. The dispute settlement rules are set out in the WTO Understanding on Rules and Procedures Governing the Settlement of Disputes. Each WTO Member has equal decision making status in the DSB.

1. The OIE Framework for safe international trade in animals and animal products

The OIE scientific and technical standards are democratically adopted by the World Assembly of OIE Delegates at annual General Assembly of the OIE. The
national Delegates are responsible for taking steps to ensure that Member Countries implement the adopted standards. When a Member considers that a trading partner has not complied with these provisions, or that its import policies are not based on science or, as appropriate, a risk analysis, the OIE may be asked to conduct an informal mediation process.

The OIE mediation process is entirely voluntary. No attempt is made to find fault. Rather, the goal is to find a mutually agreed compromise that will allow trade to be established (or re-established), preferably by application of the relevant OIE standards.

Use of the OIE mechanism provides an environment conducive to friendly bilateral discussions, with the objective of finding a basis for compromise. The key contribution of the OIE is to identify differences in Member Countries’ interpretation of the scientific issues and in the application of OIE standards and seek common ground to resolve trade restrictions, where possible.

The procedure is initiated on the basis of a request from both parties to a difference. In response, the OIE Director General designates one or more experts and a mediator to conduct the mediation. The designation of the experts requires the consent of both parties. The OIE begins the process once all parties have given their consent in writing. Confidentiality is maintained throughout the process. The proposed means of resolving the disagreement are not binding on the parties, unless both have previously agreed to be bound by the adopted solution. The discussion and the outcome of the mediation may only be divulged with the consent of all parties. The OIE mediation process may be terminated at any time, based on a written notification by one of the parties. The Code determines that the parties shall agree to meet all expenses incurred by the OIE during the procedure.
REFERENCES

Most of the information reflected in this Handbook is available on the OIE official website www.oie.int and in various publications and booklets of the OIE and WTO. Delegates are strongly recommended to visit the OIE website where some issues are described in more detail and are continuously updated. The OIE Codes and Manuals are also available on-line on the OIE website as well as other publications such as the OIE Scientific and Technical Review and the OIE Bulletin and editorials released by the Director General on recent and actual topics. For further reference and reading, some of the most relevant sources that were consulted for this Handbook are listed below:

4. OIE official website: www.oie.int