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para la
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COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES

Third Session

Rome, 7 - 11 April 2008

Report on OIE Activities to the Third Session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures of the International Plant Protection Convention

Agenda Item 7.5

1. The report attached was provided by OIE.

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REPORT ON OIE ACTIVITIES TO THE THIRD SESSION OF THE COMMISSION ON PHYTOSANITARY MEASURES OF THE INTERNATIONAL PLANT PROTECTION CONVENTION

The OIE, as an observer organisation, is pleased to be attending this, the Third session of the Commission on Phytosanitary Measures and to provide a brief report on its activities.

The OIE together with the IPPC and the Codex Alimentarius Commission (commonly known as the 'three sisters'), under the WTO's SPS Agreement are responsible for setting international standards in animal, plant and food sectors respectively.

Although the OIE's primary area of involvement is animal health, it works closely with Codex on animal production food safety. There are also some important areas where our activities parallel those of the IPPC. The OIE and IPPC share particular interests, in the areas of regionalisation, capacity building, and dispute mediation. I am pleased to provide a brief update on the OIE's work in these areas.

The OIE objectives established in the Fourth Strategic Plan (2006-2010) include tasks previously defined, i.e. transparency in the global animal disease situation; the development of scientifically based standards; the establishment of guidelines for the prevention, control and eradication of animal diseases; and the determination of OIE Members' disease status.

New strategic priorities include: strengthening the work of the OIE regional and sub-regional representatives; improving the capabilities of OIE Members through the use of mechanisms such as the WTO Standards and Trade Development Fund (STDF) strengthening Veterinary Services; and helping OIE Members to resolve trade disputes about sanitary standards.

Zoning and compartmentalization

For several years the OIE has been promoting the use of disease-free zones and, more recently, compartments, to assist with disease control and help facilitate international trade. In this context, 'zones' are sub-populations of distinct health status that are defined primarily according to geographic features while 'compartments' are sub-populations defined primarily according to management and biosecurity practices.

A new chapter for the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code*, the "General guidelines on the application of compartmentalisation" has been developed and provided to OIE Members for comment and possible adoption at the General Session in May 2008. Responding to the need for practical guidance on the application of the compartmentalisation concept, the OIE has placed on the OIE Internet site a checklist on the practical application of this concept in regards to two poultry diseases. The Checklist is not part of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code* but is designed to assist OIE Members wishing to use compartmentalisation as part of the strategy to deal with diseases that have a strong bearing on international trade in poultry and their products.

Capacity building activities of the OIE

Recognising that more than two thirds of the OIE's 172 Members are developing or least-developed countries, the OIE places great emphasis on capacity building to help Members implement the standards established by the OIE. In the interest of undertaking effective capacity

building activities, the OIE collaborates closely with other international organisations and donors, including within the WTO STDF framework.

The OIE provided to the 41st meeting of the WTO SPS Committee a substantial update on its capacity building activities. Copies of this paper can be provided on request.

OIE Informal Dispute Mediation Mechanism

The OIE *Terrestrial Animal* and *Aquatic Animal Health Codes* provide science-based sanitary standards and advice to assist Members. These standards are formally recognised under the WTO Agreement on the Application of Sanitary and Phytosanitary Measures as references for safe international trade in animals and animal.

The OIE provides a voluntary, informal mechanism to help Members resolve technical differences. This mechanism is described in the normative publications (*Codes*) of the OIE.. This is a science-based approach to resolving differences through facilitated bilateral consultation, with the assistance of experts proposed by the OIE.

Initiation of the mechanism depends upon both parties to the disagreement requesting OIE involvement, the terms of reference and the work program for the mediation. The OIE expert(s) submit a confidential report on the findings and recommendations to the OIE Director General, for transmission to both parties. The outcomes are not legally binding unless both parties agree to this in advance. The parties must meet all costs associated with the mediation process.

OIE Approach to Equivalence of Sanitary Measures

The OIE, through the standards published in the *Codes*, recognises the SPS principle of equivalence by recommending alternative sanitary measures and diagnostic procedures for many diseases. Equivalence may be obtained, for example, by enhanced surveillance and monitoring, by the use of alternative test, treatment or isolation procedures, or by combinations of these approaches.

The OIE has established guidelines in the *Codes* to help OIE Members to determine whether measures arising from different animal health and production systems may provide the same level of animal and human health protection. These guidelines are applicable whether equivalence applies at the level of the specific measures or on a systems-wide basis, and whether equivalence applies to specific areas of trade or commodities or generally.

In closing, I would like to thank the IPPC for inviting the OIE to this meeting and for giving us the opportunity to participate in IPPC working groups when relevant. We look forward to continuing this very positive working relationship.