

71st Session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe

COVID-19 lessons learned: getting ready for the next pandemic –

Intervention by the OIE Regional Representative, Dr Budimir Plavsic

Thank you, Madam President,

Dear Dr Kluge, excellencies, distinguished representatives, and participants

let me first and foremost, thank you dear Hans, for inviting the OIE, to attend 71st session of the WHO Regional Committee for Europe and to contribute to COVID-19 lessons learned session.

OIE-Europe strongly supports the work of the WHO Europe, outstanding leadership of Dr Kluge and his great team of committed professionals, with a clear vision related to prevention and control of **zoonotic threats**.

It is indeed a true honor and privilege to deliver a short statement today on behalf of OIE of Europe, and to report to you that, as a major public and animal health partners in Europe, WHO, OIE and FAO are working together on promotion and application of **One Health approach** in our region, with invitation to UNEP in Europe to join us. Our priorities are related to allocation of adequate resources, mobilization of all interested parties, transparent coordination and data sharing, but most importantly, efficient enforcement of this approach in **public, animal and ecosystem health** sectors in the whole Europe.

In the light of Covid-19 pandemic, similar like with some other pandemics before – AI, Ebola, Nipah, SARS - it is clear they almost always have an **animal origin**, while a source of infection is predominantly wildlife. We also clearly see **the health impact** of climate change, nature and biodiversity loss – these are another planetary crisis where we should invest our capacities related to resilience against health emergencies. I would also like to mention another public health concern, practically another pandemic, more silent but very dangerous for human health – AMR, where our response is designed in One Health fashion. As properly underlined by several participants of RC71, there are other pandemic risks, and their appearance might be even more catastrophic - let me to mention the possibility of wildfire spreading of contagious and highly pathogenic zoonotic diseases in animal populations too, which is currently not the case with Covid-19.

But if we act urgently on the public health crisis using **One Health approach**, and pull out the planet of the emergency, we can save many lives and reduce the burden on health systems – not only human health which is the highest priority, but also animal health and environmental health, all well connected and inter-dependent. And particularly to build preparedness capacities in **all health sectors** for next pandemics.

World Organization for Animal Health - OIE, in partnership with national Veterinary Services of 182 Member Countries, I trust, invested huge resources in preparedness and capacity building, to protect animals from contagious disease, including zoonoses. These aspects are widely elaborated across the OIE International Standards and recommendations (OIE Codes and OIE Manuals) and integrated into the OIE capacity building programmes we carry out in all regions, including Europe.

From the beginning of Covid-19 crisis, OIE was fully committed to support our public health colleagues and implemented a lot of concrete activities in areas under our mandate, developed specific guidelines and recommendations for Veterinary Services, participated in joint working groups and field missions with WHO.

Recently, we developed **OIE Wildlife Health Framework** endorsed by all Members, with overall goal - to improve our capacities to reduce, anticipate and manage the risk of pathogen emergence and transmission at the human–animal–ecosystem interface, and to build strong systems for early detection, notification, and management of wildlife diseases by cross-border collaboration.

In Europe, thanks to you dear Hans, and regional director of the FAO and a good friend, Mr Vladimir Olegovich Rakhmanin, in April this year, we established regional **One-Health Coordination mechanism**, which is remarkable but still very practical achievement and regional flagship. This will help us, together with 53 Members from Europe and other partners, and global Tripartite leadership, to implement our One Health priorities, to save lives, economies and to contribute to meet **UN Sustainable Development Goals**.

Colleagues, when it comes to our lessons from this pandemic, I believe you might take into consideration in addition to 10 lessons Dr Dorit Nitzan presented yesterday:

- I trust that **now** is the right time to use political momentum and overall commitment by all relevant actors, to promote integrated, multi-sector, multi-stakeholder and multi-lateral One Health collaboration, pandemic preparedness, strengthening of resilience and capacity building actions.

- Pandemic threats could be prevented and controlled only in close collaboration of **all public health sectors**, on national, regional, and global level, while cornerstone should be the **science, research and innovation**.

Under this framework, backed up by adequate structures, resources and governance mechanism, we can define and implement concrete activities, including coordinated monitoring, surveillance, rapid alert and response system on zoonotic and food borne diseases, AMR and other emerging risks.

OIE-Europe will be very happy to follow this vision and work together with you when it comes to One health priorities, to promote it to Veterinary Authorities in all 53 Members, and to contribute ideas of **United Actions for Better Health of Europe**, and beyond.

Thank you

Dr Budimir Plavsic