



*In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful*

**Message from**

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**REGIONAL DIRECTOR**

**WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION**

**to the**

**CELEBRATION OF THE FIRST NATIONAL ZOOLOSES DAY**

**Islamic Republic of Iran, 3 July 2004**

Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on the occasion of the First National Zoonoses Day. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the government of the Islamic Republic of Iran for launching such an important initiative with the very clear objective of sensitizing the public and policy-makers to the importance of zoonoses and of increasing community awareness about prevention and control of zoonotic diseases.

We strongly hope that the decision to celebrate this first national zoonoses day illustrates a high-level commitment by the national programmes of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and the Ministry of Jihad-Agriculture to mobilize the necessary resources and to collaborate closely with all the relevant sectors in order to address the common challenges in control of zoonoses.

As you are aware, zoonoses continues to be an important public health problem and the cause of economic loss in some countries in the world. In addition to causing human morbidity and mortality, such diseases hamper agricultural production, decrease availability of food and create barriers to international trade.

Brucellosis, rabies, salmonellosis and hydatidosis are among the main zoonotic diseases in the Eastern Mediterranean Region. In the past two decades, other emerging and re-emerging zoonotic diseases had also acquired a particular significance. These include Rift Valley fever in the Arabian Peninsula and Egypt, the New World screwworm in the Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, and zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis in almost all countries of the Region. Common to the emergence of all these diseases are changes in animal production practices, climate patterns and demographics, and globalization of the food industry.

In the Islamic Republic of Iran, despite commendable efforts and investments, many zoonotic diseases, such as brucellosis, rabies and zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis, continue to be important health problems. Crimean-Congo haemorrhagic fever is an emerging disease.

Although control of zoonoses constitutes an important health matter, many factors involved in the prevention and control of zoonotic infections cannot be addressed by the health sector alone. Success in reducing the public health significance of zoonotic disease greatly depends on the level of cooperation between the medical and veterinary sectors in diagnosis of zoonoses, exchange of information, organization of shared surveillance systems, common training of staff and creation of community awareness. High-level commitment and the ability of national programmes to mobilize the necessary resources and to collaborate closely with other relevant sectors are needed in order to cope with the common challenges in control of zoonoses.

The strategies for strengthening zoonoses prevention and control in the Region need to focus on enhancing political commitment, identifying the most appropriate control interventions and ensuring collaboration among all relevant stakeholders. Raising awareness among decision-makers and policy-makers about the burden of zoonoses in humans and animals will assist in securing political commitment and financial support for zoonoses control programmes.

Intersectoral collaboration must be strengthened by the development, in each country, of a single national multisectoral plan for prevention of zoonoses in humans and animals. To implement such strategies, multisectoral coordination structures with responsibility for zoonoses control should be established at national level. In addition, information on the financial burden of zoonoses should be collected, analysed and used to enhance political support, and partnerships with relevant organizations should be strengthened at regional level.

International and intersectoral technical cooperation are essential in respect of training of personnel, provision of technical expertise and transfer of technology. I am pleased that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the Ministry of Jihad-Agriculture, the Municipality, civil society and many other relevant institutions and communities are represented in this important occasion and we hope that the celebration of the First National Zoonoses Day will provide an opportunity to better coordinate the efforts for surveillance and control of zoonotic infections in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

I would like to thank the Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Programme (MZCP) for its participation also. I am pleased to note that the cooperation between the Islamic Republic of Iran and MZCP is continuously increasing. I am confident that the experience of MZCP will play a vital and indispensable role in ensuring success in the prevention and control of zoonotic diseases in the Islamic Republic of Iran.

In conclusion, I wish you a very successful outcome of this important event and a strengthening of cooperation between all parties involved in prevention and control of zoonoses.