

In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

to the

**REGIONAL SEMINAR ON INTERNATIONAL AND INTERSECTORAL
COLLABORATION IN SURVEILLANCE AND CONTROL OF**

MAJOR ZOONOSSES,

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Your Excellency, Ladies and Gentlemen, Dear Colleagues,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you to this Regional Seminar on International and Intersectoral Collaboration in Surveillance and Control of Major Zoonoses. I would like to extend my thanks to the Government of Cyprus for hosting this meeting and for providing such excellent facilities.

The selection of Cyprus as the venue of this meeting was made in order to acknowledge the achievements of Cyprus in the surveillance and control of zoonotic diseases. The meeting also provides a good opportunity for other countries of the Eastern

Mediterranean Region where zoonoses are a public health problem to become more acquainted with the experiences of the National Zoonoses Control Programme in Cyprus, in terms of both organization and management of surveillance and control activities for zoonotic diseases and the need for close coordination between the medical and veterinary sectors.

Zoonoses are a worldwide problem of both public health and economic importance. They are of public health significance not only because this group of diseases is a cause of considerable morbidity among the human population but also because some of them cause a serious diminution of much needed foodstuffs, especially animal proteins, which are essential to human health and well-being.

It must be realized that many factors involved in prevention and control of these infections cannot be covered by the health sector alone, but require the strong involvement of other sectors, including those dealing with animal health, environmental health, food production, trade and education. The lack of inter-professional and intersectoral cooperation at the country level may lead to stagnation of control efforts, despite the availability of technical knowledge and the good intentions of national authorities in eliminating the consequences of this group of infections for the health of the population and economic growth.

The prevention of zoonotic and food-borne diseases greatly depends on the responsibility of individuals, families and the community for safeguarding health. This means that the promotion of healthy lifestyles and food hygiene practices through health education is an important element of any veterinary public health programme and should be further strengthened. International technical cooperation is also essential for national control programmes in respect of training of personnel, provision of technical expertise and transfer of technology.

Close cooperation between WHO, the United Nations Food and Agriculture Organization, the United Nations Environment Programme, and other international organizations is needed to ensure even better coordination of efforts for surveillance and

control of zoonotic infections. This is particularly so with regard to diagnostic procedures, the availability of reagents, vaccines, drugs and diagnostic tests.

The main objectives of this consultation are to review the status of control of major zoonoses and to strengthen cooperation between veterinary and medical services in their surveillance and control. I am confident that your experience and knowledge in the organization and management of national veterinary public health programmes will lead to fruitful and detailed discussion on the strengthening of intersectoral and international cooperation in control of zoonoses, and to updating of the Regional strategy in prevention and control of this group of infections.

I look forward to your suggestions and recommendations, which I have no doubt will further contribute to the promotion of health in our Region.

I wish once again to extend my appreciation to the Government of Cyprus for hosting the meeting and also to thank you for your attendance and for all the preparatory work you have undertaken in this regard.

Finally, I wish you successful deliberations, fruitful exchange of experience and a pleasant stay in Nicosia.