



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

on the occasion of

CELEBRATION OF THE NATIONAL ZOOSES DAY

Islamic Republic of Iran, 4 July 2005

Your Excellencies, Dear colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen,

On behalf of the World Health Organization, it gives me great pleasure to welcome you all on the occasion of the celebration of the Second National Zoonoses Day in the Islamic Republic of Iran, which, once again highlights the importance of zoonoses and the contribution of the veterinary public health programmes to both animal and human health.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Iran for offering, for the second time, an opportunity for medical doctors, veterinarians and the general public to unify and to collaborate to strengthen prevention and control of zoonotic diseases. We hope this important event will not only provide the general public with a

better understanding of the veterinary public health activities and responsibilities but will promote also multisectoral approaches and integration in the health and agriculture sectors. As you know, partnerships between the public and private sectors, including associations of livestock producers, food producers and consumer groups is crucial in prevention and control of zoonoses.

In fact this celebration of a day on zoonoses illustrates the high level of commitment by the national programmes of the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and of the Ministry of Jihad and Agriculture to adopt common multisectoral approaches and ensure the political support necessary to make things happen.

Ladies and Gentleman,

Zoonotic diseases and foodborne diseases continue to impose a considerable threat to the health, economic and social situation of many countries of our region. Without adequate safeguards, diseases of people and animals can now move more quickly around the world or become global problems. About 75% of the new diseases that have affected humans over the past ten years were caused by pathogens originating from an animal or from products of animal origin. This indicates how much medical doctors and veterinarians need to work more and more together, for example, with regard to fears that “avian influenza could be the harbinger of a human pandemic”.

Efficient surveillance and control of zoonoses require that human and animal health issues be merged into a new public health agenda. Creating and responding to such an agenda depends on effective interactions between human and veterinary clinical, laboratory and public health professional organizations. These interactions are essential for implementing effective zoonoses control programmes. However, it is unfortunate that in our region, although the benefits of intersectoral collaboration are recognized by all sectors involved in zoonoses surveillance and control, collaborative efforts to date have been weak due to technical and administrative obstacles. We strongly hope that this celebration day in Iran will be used to emphasize these issues and especially to highlight the fundamental importance of veterinary services and veterinary public health

programmes to the well-being of humans. With increasing urbanization we often forget the extent to which rural people depend on animals for food and transport (of people or goods) and the health of their animals can mean the difference between life and death.

Ladies and gentleman,

WHO's Regional Office for the Eastern Mediterranean is following and supporting the commendable efforts and investments of the Islamic Republic of Iran, to control many zoonotic diseases, particularly the programmes on brucellosis, rabies, tick-borne haemorrhagic fevers and zoonotic cutaneous leishmaniasis, and we hope this collaboration will increase in the future. We would like to express our appreciation to the Ministry of Health and Medical Education and Ministry of Jihad and Agriculture, of the Islamic Republic of Iran, for the initiative undertaken to join the WHO Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Programme (MZCP). This specialized programme is successfully developing intercountry services, including with countries from the northern Mediterranean border and with international organizations specialized in animal health, but its cooperation with Eastern Mediterranean Region countries is continuously increasing. Recent important activities of the MZCP include, for example, the successful implementation of a project on strengthening brucellosis control in the Syrian Arab Republic and it recently initiated a similar project in Jordan. The MZCP represents in our region an important instrument towards multisectoral prevention and control of zoonotic and related food-borne diseases. We are confident that the internal formal procedures will soon be concluded and that membership of the Islamic Republic of Iran in the MZCP will be announced very shortly.

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.