



In the Name of God, the Compassionate, the Merciful

Message from

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REGIONAL DIRECTOR

WHO EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN REGION

to the

**REGIONAL SEMINAR ON PREVENTION AND CONTROL OF
ZOO NOTIC DISEASES**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

It gives me great pleasure to welcome you all to this Regional Seminar on Prevention and Control of Zoonotic Diseases in Tunis, Tunisia. I would like to take this opportunity to thank the Government of Tunisia for hosting this meeting and to extend my deep gratitude to His Excellency Dr Habib M'barak, Minister of Public Health of Tunisia, for his keen interest and the excellent support extended in facilitating this meeting. I hope that participants will not only benefit from the experience of Tunisia in zoonoses control, but also from their great hospitality.

As you are aware, zoonoses continue to be an important public health problem and the cause of economic loss in most of the countries of the Eastern Mediterranean Region. The major

zoonoses in the Region are rabies, brucellosis and echinococcosis. In recent years some emerging diseases have been reported in some areas, such as Rift Valley fever and Crimean-Congo hemorrhagic fever. During this meeting, you are invited to review the priority zoonoses by country and to examine the gaps and weaknesses in the current control programmes.

As you all know, the responsibility for surveillance and control of zoonoses falls on both the public health and the veterinary sectors and cooperation between the veterinary and medical sectors is becoming an essential requirement.

EMRO has been recommending the establishment of Veterinary Public Health (VPH) units within government health services, such as Ministries of Health or Agriculture. Experience has shown that the impact of VPH activities has been greatest in countries where functioning VPH units are created. However, we understand that still some, if not many, have yet to establish the VPH. Moreover, even in countries with the VPH, in practice several administrative and technical problems often impair their implementation. You are therefore requested to tackle these important issues and come up with practical and feasible recommendations, adapted to the prevailing situation and available resources of each country.

International technical cooperation is also essential in respect of training of personnel, provision of technical expertise and transfer of technology. We acknowledge that the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), and the Office International d'Epizooties (OIE) are represented in this seminar and we hope the seminar provides an opportunity to better coordinate the efforts for surveillance and control of zoonotic infections.

We also acknowledge with thanks the participation of the Mediterranean Zoonoses Control Programme (MZCP) in this seminar. I am pleased to note that the activities of the MZCP are continuously increasing and that the cooperation between EMRO and MZCP has played a vital and indispensable role in ensuring the success of the regional veterinary health programme.

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 to strengthen intersectoral and international cooperation for the control of zoonoses and to update the regional strategy in prevention and control of this group of infections.

I look forward to your suggestions and recommendations.

I wish you a very successful meeting and a pleasant stay in this hospitable country and beautiful city of Tunis.