



Organisation
Mondiale
de la Santé
Animale

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Organisation
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Health

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de Sanidad
Animal

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Dear Delegate,

COVID-19: Our Time to Act on Wild Animal Wet Markets

It has been a tumultuous start to the year 2020.

With the spread of COVID-19 to over 170 countries and a tragic number of human infections and deaths, COVID-19 has had inconceivable worldwide socioeconomic impacts. We wish the best for you and your families during this time, and will continue to monitor the effects of the pandemic globally and on individual countries.

As you know, COVID-19 has also directly impacted the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE). For the first time since the Second World War, we have made the difficult decision to postpone the Annual General Session.

We appreciate that you will be managing multiple disruptions at this time. However, the OIE and its Delegates have a critical role in influencing global policy to minimise the risks and impacts of zoonotic disease outbreaks. Now is the time for our concerted and collaborative action.

In the global food system, markets that sell and slaughter live wild animals ('wild animal wet markets') hold a strong cultural importance in many nations and facilitate key food security outcomes. For many generations across different continents, wild animal wet markets have been a traditional and valued form of fresh food retail. However, they have also been linked to the emergence of devastating diseases such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome and COVID-19.

Through our co-ordinated action, we can support the global food system to minimise the risks of zoonotic disease outbreaks emerging from wild animal wet markets.



The OIE is well positioned to address key risks at the human-animal-ecosystem interface. Through regular collaboration with partner agencies and expert networks such as the Working Group on Wildlife, and through our work on projects such as EBO-SURSY, the OIE has a solid foundation to contribute expertise on the scientific risks and socioeconomic drivers of the wildlife trade supply chain. We are working closely with the OIE Working Group on Wildlife as we develop an OIE programme of work on risk mitigation in wildlife trade, and their statement signalling the need for this work programme is attached. The OIE encourages our Members, Cooperation Partners and Resource

Partners with an interest in this work programme to contact us with offers of in-kind technical support or funding support.

When timing and resources are amenable, we encourage you, as an OIE Delegate, to engage in policy discussions with your governments, other stakeholders and affected communities on how your country can reduce the zoonotic risks of terrestrial wild animal wet markets. This objective could be achieved in a number of ways, including, where feasible, a phase-out of wild animal wet markets. We applaud the action some countries have already undertaken, and the OIE work programme under development will aim to support you in these efforts.

By working together on this issue, we are hopeful that we can build a better future for all countries by reducing the probability and impacts of future global zoonotic disease outbreaks. We hope that you will be active in joining this initiative.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Monique Eloit Director-General, OIE	Dr Mark Schipp President of the OIE World Assembly of Delegates Australian Chief Veterinary Officer
	

C.c. OIE Focal Points for Wildlife