

Speech 2

Opening Session of the Celebration of the world wide freedom from Rinderpest (10 min) Side event at the 55th IAEA General Conference

DDG/K-FAO will speak after the opening statement of DG-IAEA

Chairperson of the IAEA General Conference,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Ministers,
Ambassadors and Permanent Representatives,
Director General of the IAEA,
Director General of the OIE,
Vice-Chairperson of AU,
Distinguished IAEA Member States,

Rinderpest was considered public animal health enemy number one in 1946, the year that FAO was established. Today, the elimination of Rinderpest virus marks not only the first time that an animal disease has been eradicated globally, but also only the second time, after the human disease smallpox, that a disease has been eradicated worldwide.

We need to learn from this success in leadership and cooperation to make inroads into other animal diseases that affect production, represent threats to human and animal health, food security and livelihoods. We have the means and commitment, and with the support of our Member States, we can continue to do great things. Clearly, what we have learned and the foundation for future success established during the Rinderpest campaigns should be used to address other livelihood threats and animal diseases.

Major campaigns in Asia throughout the 1950s and 1960s and in Africa, from 1960 through 1976, brought rinderpest largely under control. However, the resurgence of rinderpest in the 1980s resulted in its spread throughout sub-Saharan Africa, Central and South Asia. FAO, in 1983, provided assistance to countries to control the disease and mobilize support to regional eradication campaigns.¹

By the late 1980s, it was increasingly apparent that a global coordination mechanism was needed.

The Global Rinderpest Eradication Programme (GREP) was established in 1994 as a global response. GREP was part of the Emergency Prevention System for Transboundary Animal and Plant Pests and Diseases, or EMPRES, initiative by the FAO Director General. GREP introduced a framework for the progressive, sequenced, and time-bound eradication of rinderpest worldwide – and targeted 2010 as the projected deadline for global rinderpest eradication.

The Joint FAO-IAEA Division on Nuclear Techniques in Food and Agriculture was instrumental in introducing new diagnostic tools, and building and transferring laboratory capacities and capabilities in developing countries. The World Organisation for Animal Health - the acronym OIE is better known and stands for *Office International des Epizooties* - developed guidelines on rinderpest with inputs from FAO experts, partner institutions and reference laboratories.

Today, we can note that the last reported outbreak of rinderpest was in 2001 in Kenyan wildlife, and it was a regional programme, the Somali Ecosystem Rinderpest Coordination Unit, where the virus was last reported to be in circulation. The last known use of the vaccine was in 2006 in Central Asia.

However, our work does not stop here. We need to safeguard all rinderpest viruses - be it at national or regional level. Rinderpest virus sequestration and the handling of rinderpest viable material are therefore of utmost importance and should be handled in a secure and coordinated manner. The Joint FAO/IAEA Division's laboratory at Seibersdorf is instrumental to sequestration and safekeeping needs. We must count on further

¹ Pan African Rinderpest Campaign (PARC), the South Asia Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (SAREC), the West Asia Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (WAREC) and subsequent programmes.

support and investment to maintain our success and leverage our lessons learned and knowledge base to eradicate other animal disease and threats to human health, food security and livelihoods.²

In addition to financial investment in eradication, we must recognize that political commitment was an equally crucial component of our success. In fact, the first multinational programme to eradicate Rinderpest, known as Joint Project 15 (JP15), could only have been accomplished through the political commitment by the leadership of the Organization for African Unity.³

The Pan-African Programme for the Control of Epizootics (PACE) allowed countries in sub-Saharan Africa to further proceed on the OIE pathway to declare freedom from Rinderpest. In turn, the regional concept for controlling rinderpest was then successfully applied in Asia.⁴

The successful partnership between IAEA and FAO - in the form of the Animal Health and Production Section of the Joint FAO/IAEA Division - together with the long term support of the IAEA and FAO Member States - was also instrumental in ensuring the global success of rinderpest eradication.

FAO/IAEA Coordinated Research Projects and IAEA-Technical Cooperation Projects, together with FAO-Technical Cooperation - assisted in delivering the support to laboratories and the field involved in the global programme to eradicate rinderpest.⁵ Also, the pivotal role that the FAO/IAEA research laboratories in Seibersdorf played in adapting reagents and techniques for rinderpest diagnosis to kit formats suitable for use in developing countries also needs to be recognized.⁶

FAO is not only grateful to the IAEA, but to all the unsung heroes who did the hard work. Member states deserve the most credit in establishing quality assured programmes of diagnosis and surveillance. FAO and IAEA provided technical support throughout the various stages of the eradication campaign – and this support needs to be maintained given post-eradication obligations. We must also recognize the dedication of the livestock keepers, pastoralists, village leaders, and animal health workers and veterinarians.

We admire the leadership that countries themselves showed and how complex problems like Rinderpest eradication can be solved, through team spirit and leadership.

We need to learn from this success in leadership and cooperation to make inroads into other animal diseases that affect production or are threats to human health and food security. We have the means and commitment, and with the support of our Member States, we can continue to do great things.

² Between FAO and IAEA, investment into Rinderpest eradication over the period spanning the 1980s until now has been roughly USD 45 million from FAO and USD 20 million from IAEA. The international support was critical and in most cases catalytic of nature as the countries themselves invested some USD 3.5 billion globally and around USD 1.2 billion in South Saharan Africa to ensure that we have today a world free from Rinderpest. As an example, for Chad which was one of the most effected countries in the 1960s, this meant a GDP increase of about 3% in total with an agriculture related GDP increase of 6% which relates to a rural household increase of about 8%. (NB: each 3% points equates to USD 50 million [2000]).

³ Later, through the aegis of OAU and its technical institutions, IBAR and PANVAC, the implementation of the Pan-African Rinderpest Campaign (PARC), which covered 34 countries in Africa, enabled the restructuring of veterinary services, and the undertaking of wide vaccination and surveillance measures needed to mitigate the impact of Rinderpest.

⁴ West Asian Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (WAREC) involving eleven countries and South Asian Rinderpest Eradication Campaign (SAREC) covering seven countries.

⁵ This allowed mobilization of the resources necessary for undertaking all laboratory-based activities and fostered a universally standardized approach, provided effective mechanisms for regional and global reporting of sero-monitoring results and for troubleshooting test or related problems and thereby made it possible for MS to pursue the OIE pathway to declaration of freedom from Rinderpest.

⁶ This involved close collaboration with Institute of Animal Health, Pirbright (the FAO World Reference Laboratory for Rinderpest) in the UK and the Institut d'élevage et de médecine vétérinaire des Pays Tropicaux (IEMVT) in France (now CIRAD), to develop and transfer ELISA kits for Rinderpest to Member States laboratories.