

**SPEECH BY DR HUGO IDOYAGA, PRESIDENT OF THE WOAAH
25th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa**

His Excellency, Dr Mokgweetsi Masisi, President of the Republic of Botswana,

Honourable Ministers,

Dr Monique Eloit, Director General of the WOAAH,

Ms. Josefa Leonel Correia, Commissioner for Agriculture, Rural Development, the Blue economy and Sustainable environment of the African Union Commission,

His Excellency, Mr Elias Magosi, Executive Secretary of SADC,

Dr Honoré Robert N'lemba Mabela, President of the WOAAH Regional Commission for Africa,

Esteemed WOAAH Regional and Sub-Regional Representatives,

Esteemed Delegates of the Region,

Representatives of International and Regional Organisations,

As President of the World Assembly of Delegates of WOAAH, it is a great honour for me to welcome you to this 25th Conference of the Regional Commission for Africa, accompanied by such distinguished national and regional authorities.

I am also very pleased that the Regional Commission is finally able to meet again in person after four years. The Conference of the Regional Commission represents a unique opportunity for the region to discuss issues of relevance and common interest in the area of animal health and welfare, as well as the safety of food derived from animal production, particularly at a time when we are facing new challenges at the national, regional and global level.

On behalf of the members of the Council, I wish to thank you for the invitation extended to me and regret that I will not be able to be present in person during this event of such major importance for the Region. However, I will certainly be very attentive to the conclusions and recommendations that will result from this week of discussions on issues as relevant to the region such as PPR and Rabies, among the many other topics on the agenda.

Dr Batawui and Dr Dlamini, who are both regional members of the Council, will be responsible for presenting to us all the most important points arising from this Conference. For my part, I will not hesitate to make sure that all the regional

needs that arise during the week are discussed within the Council, so that we can thus respond to our Members in the best way possible.

AS WE ALL KNOW the core mission of WOAAH is to ensure animal health and welfare at the global level. Animal health has a direct impact on the livelihoods and food security of millions of people. Many human infectious diseases have animal origin. This is why animal health must be addressed by employing a inter-sectoral and holistic approach.

The present and future of humanity represents many challenges. Climate change, socio-economic transformations, new consumption patterns, prevalent and emerging diseases, animal welfare, antimicrobial resistance, the growing importance of aquaculture production, the roll of wildlife, among others, are the challenges we are currently facing.

And the responses to these complex challenges cannot be addressed in isolation, rather they require collaborative, interdisciplinary and inter-sectoral approach, for which both the WOAAH and its MEMBERS will necessitate increasingly demanding technical input and scientific expertise.

The COVID-19 pandemic has taught us some very important lessons, starting with the confirmation of the key role played by both WOAAH and the Veterinary Services in general. It has also reminded us that inter-sectoral collaboration through the ONE HEALTH approach, along with the exchange of technical information and data, are key to a better understanding of the risks at the human/animal/environment interface and, above all, to successfully respond to future health challenges. In this sense, the ONE HEALTH concept is a fundamental part of WOAAH's strategies and actions.

I thus urge all members of the Region to cooperate with WOAAH in defining and adopting positions on these global challenges. This will enable your Veterinary Services to be more effective and above all resilient. It will also help our Organisation to be recognised for its key role in society, which goes beyond the competencies of the Veterinary Services sector.

In a globalised world, the sanitary condition that guarantees the safe trade of animals and animal commodities requires the effective implementation by members of the standards and guidelines established by WOAAH. In this respect, the responsibilities of the Veterinary Services are and will become more important.

I would also like to make a special mention of WOAAH Seventh Strategic Plan, as adopted at the 88th General Session. Its effective implementation undoubtedly requires financial support and knowledge sharing, data availability and accessibility from all Members. In this regard, and notwithstanding the financial difficulties that some Members in the region may be experiencing, I sincerely urge you to support the efforts and needs of our organisation. All efforts and active involvement in WOAAH activities will translate into growth and overcoming challenges at the regional level, along with regional and therefore global health and welfare.

I am convinced that this Regional Conference will facilitate dialogue and exchange of information between the Delegates of the Region, invited experts, international organisations and others. The contributions that result from the discussions on the issues of regional interest will represent important inputs for WOAHA to provide the most appropriate support to the region's Members.

Respected delegates, ladies and gentlemen, I wish you great success and sincerely hope that this conference will provide an opportune moment to reflect and strengthen regional and global unity on issues that address our common future. In this respect, we owe it to our children and the future generations.

THANK YOU VERY MUCH