

Speech for the OIE Sub-Regional Representative for Southern Africa, Dr Moetapele Letshwenyo at the occasion of the workshop on “AMR in Aquaculture” held from 26 – 28th November 2019, in Durban, South Africa.

Director of ceremonies,

Representative of the Government of South Africa, and staff of the DAFF;

Distinguished OIE Delegates here present, and participants;

Representatives of the SADC Secretariat here present

The Representative from FAO here present

The Representative from WHO here present

Representatives of other International Organisations here Present;

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

Let me take this opportunity to thank the Government of the Republic of South Africa for hosting this important workshop on AMR in Aquacultural settings. I further acknowledge and appreciate the collaboration OIE enjoys with the tripartite partners FAO and WHO, as well as SADC Secretariat and OIE Reference Centres worldwide – indeed together we stand and divided we fall! Furthermore, appreciate our resource persons who have come from all over the world to support us, and last

but not least, yourselves dear participants, for having heeded our call.

Director of ceremonies; the OIE is an international organisation, responsible for among others, veterinary public health, which includes issues of Antimicrobial resistance (AMR). The organization uses its Member Countries, and the many international partner organisations (Reference Centres), and strategically placed Regional office to achieve this mandate.

Distinguished Ladies and Gentlemen;

We are gathered here today for yet another capacity building effort, in collaboration with partners, this time to discuss AMR in aquaculture – a relatively rarely addressed topic. As will be seen, this is a complex topic given the way aquatic animals are reared and treated. The workshop also gives an opportunity to bring together different experts to share notes and experiences and hopefully come up with joint solution at both national and regional levels – which means this work should continue back home.

The event comes appropriately after the commemoration of the World Antibiotic Awareness Week (WAAW), which most countries commemorated, with the aim of increasing global awareness of antibiotic resistance (AMR) and to encourage best

practices in the use of antibiotics among the general public, public and animal health workers and policy makers to avoid the further emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance.

Since their discovery, antibiotics have served as the cornerstone of modern medicine - therefore they are very essential to both animal and human medicine. However, the persistent overuse and misuse of antibiotics in human and animal health have encouraged the emergence and spread of antibiotic resistance. In Africa, the situation is further compounded by the free availability of antimicrobials over-the-counter and handled by untrained (lay) persons – issues of under-dosing and overuse; free flow of counterfeit drugs, taking advantage of weak regulatory controls across sectors, etc.

It may be fair to say that in the SADC region, we may not even know the extent of antimicrobial use in aquatic animals – how much is applied through medicated feeds, and how much is applied direct through water treatment or contaminated water systems – therefore our gathering here should address some of these challenges.

AMR requires a “One Health” approach; a concept founded on awareness that there are synergies and opportunities when public and animal health sectors, as well as other sectors work

together to control disease pathogens and related ailments (such as AMR) at the interface between humans, animals and the environment.

At international level, putting the “One Health” vision into practice has been facilitated by a formal alliance between the World Health Organization (WHO), the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), commonly called the “Tripartite”. The three Organisations have jointly prioritised antimicrobial resistance together with rabies and zoonotic influenza viruses, for their joint actions.

The tripartite partners have embraced AMR with developments of the AMR Strategies, all hinged in the WHO Global Action Plan. The tripartite encouraged member states to develop national action plans (NAPs) on AMR, modelling after the GAP in order to domesticate the objectives and come up with country-specific interventions and actions towards effective mitigation and containment of AMR. It is pleasing to know that at regional level here, SADC is working with the local tripartite partners to develop a SADC AMR Strategy, customised to the region – this will in addition assist in harmonising efforts to curb AMR and bring closer the different sectors involved in its control in the Sub-region, and avoid duplication of effort (resource wastage)

and also bring us (sectors and development partners) together for a common purpose. It will be incumbent on MC to use it once it is finalised.

Director of ceremonies;

In conclusion, ta once again take this opportunity to thank all those who supported this workshop (financially and in-kind). The OIE pledges its support and commitment to this cause, and promise you that we will keep doing whatever we are capable of doing to support you in this fight. I look forward to very fruitful deliberations and hope this will be another landmark workshop to take us a step further in the fight against AMR.

I thank you!