

***Dr Kazimieras Lukauskas gives a moving speech as he prepares to step down
from the position as the OIE Regional Representative in Moscow***

Dear Director General Monique Éloit, dear colleagues,

I wish to express my sincere gratitude to all of you for the cooperation and joint work undertaken in the OIE over these past years. I would like to inform you that I am stepping down from the position as the Regional Representative in Moscow as of January 2019.



Dr Lukauskas stands with OIE Director General, Dr M. Éloit, after giving his farewell speech. - ©OIE/B. Davies

The time has come to conclude this exciting period of my life of 8 years with the OIE.

I have worked in the veterinary field for more than 45 years. I have spent two years as a veterinarian working in a collective farm, 13 years as the head of a regional Veterinary Service, 22 years as the head of the Veterinary Services of Lithuania and finally eight great years as your colleague at the OIE.

Forty-five years are not much in the history of humanity, but quite a lot in the life of a human being. My life is veterinary and the veterinary field is my life. There were some great challenges in leading the Veterinary Service when Lithuania became independent 28 years ago. The times then were very hard not only for

veterinarians, but for the whole country. However, the will and passion of the veterinary profession led us to create the Veterinary Service, which was both an example to and inspiration for other countries. Professor Nikola Belev helped us a great deal in making connections with the OIE during that time.

We used the *OIE Terrestrial Animal Health Code* as a basis for our veterinary legislation and state Veterinary Services that were independent from all the ministries and subordinate directly to the Government of Lithuania. This system is still in place today.

I came to the OIE as an official delegate of Lithuania in 1992 with an application from the Prime Minister of Lithuania to restore our membership to the organisation. I met with OIE Director General, Dr Jean Blancou, at that time, who helped Lithuania a lot. By meeting with the President of Lithuania, Mr Valdas Adamkus,

the OIE Director General made the position of veterinarians stronger among our national political representatives.

We received both financial and political support; the process to join the European Union was started; we built modern central and regional institutions and border posts and finally, we organised international OIE seminars for Eastern European veterinarians.

In 2000, OIE Director General, Dr Bernard Vallat helped to create the State Food and Veterinary Service by a suggested plan for how this might happen. He visited Lithuania several times, meeting with the Prime Minister A. Brazauskas; Dr Romano Marabelli also participated in this delegation as the CVO of Italy. All of the help and advice received from these people was very important. The Lithuanian State Food and Veterinary Service has become a European institution that I can be proud of. Prime Minister Brazauskas attended the OIE General Session in 2006, and the relationship between the OIE and Lithuania became even stronger. I was even elected as the General Secretary of the OIE Commission for Europe and was Vice-President for the European Commission for two terms of office. I am particularly grateful to the OIE administration for holding its Regional Commission for Europe in Vilnius in 2008.

I have learned a lot from OIE seminars and conferences. I have received a lot of help and support from OIE colleagues, Director General Bernard Vallat and experts from all over the world. I have attended all of the OIE General Sessions for more than twenty-six years. In 2007, I was awarded the Order of Agricultural Merit (Commander) by the Ministry of Agriculture of France. The following year, the OIE honoured me with the silver Medal of Merit. The OIE is a highly esteemed international organisation. It was not easy to be in one of the leading management positions here, but my experience of 19 years as delegate helped me a lot.

After finishing my term of service in Lithuania, I attended my first OIE PVS mission in Afghanistan in 2010. It was a complex trip not only because of the difficult situation in the country, but also because I was quite new at this kind of mission. Dr David Sherman was of great help to me then.

The mission in Afghanistan opened my eyes to the importance of the help that the OIE provides to Veterinary Services worldwide and I saw the opportunities that the organisation gives them.

In 2012, during a meeting I had with Drs Vallat, Éloit, Panin and Belev, the decision was made to open the Regional Representation office in Moscow. In 2013 Dr Vallat and the Russian Minister of Agriculture, Mr N. Fodorov, signed an agreement and opened the office with Dr Eloit, the OIE Deputy DG at that time. This was the official starting point and after much more effort, we finally established an office in Moscow that is very much worth a visit today. I am very grateful to OIE Director General Monique Éloit, who visited us in Moscow a week ago, holding valuable meetings with the Russian Vice-Prime Minister S. Dankvert.

Dear colleagues, I am very thankful to you, and to OIE DG Monique Éloit, and am happy to say that the diplomatic activities and personal meetings that took place with the presidents of Turkmenistan and Tajikistan, the Prime Minister of Kazakhstan and the ministers of other countries were very cordial and opened doors to me that were previously closed. With the consent of the Prime Minister, the Minister of Kazakhstan and the previous OIE Director General, we opened the OIE Sub-regional office in Astana in 2013, which continues its activities today.

I am both confident and relaxed in leaving my position, because the new generation of veterinarians is ready to carry on –



Left to right: Dr B. Plavsich, Ms A. Zhorgabayeva, Dr K. Lukauskas, Dr E. Panina, Dr M. Éloit, Dr D. Montabond and Dr M. Taitubayev. - © OIE/B. Davies

young professionals like the head of the OIE Sub-regional office in Astana, Dr Mereke Taitubayev, as well as Dr Budimir Plavsich who will take over from me. I am sure that the Regional Representation in Moscow, and Sub-regional offices in Astana and Brussels will continue their activities successfully.

So, once again, a sincere thank you to OIE Director General Monique Éloit, Deputy Director Generals Jean-Philippe Dopp and Matthew Stone, as well as to the Administrative and Technical assistant in the Moscow office, Dr Ekaterina Panina, and to all of you for your collaboration.

I wish the best of luck, health and success to all of you in implementing the OIE's 7th strategic plan.

I will stay active in Lithuania and, if needed, will always be ready to help the OIE.

Thank you very much.

■ December 2018