

Tunisia's One Health success story of antimicrobial resistance and rabies

Early last month, on 7 September 2019, the Tunisian Minister of Health, HE Sonia Ben Cheikh, and the Tunisian Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, HE Samir Taïeb, signed the joint national action plan to fight **antimicrobial resistance (AMR)** and their joint engagement pledged in the Global Strategic Plan to end human deaths from dog-mediated **rabies** by 2030 (Zero by 30), within the framework of One Health, in line with the priorities of the Tripartite collaboration between the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE), World Health Organization (WHO) and Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO). Owing to the fact that these success stories are a direct result of the collaborative and inter-sectoral synergies over the past two years, representatives of the three organisations were invited to attend the signing. View pictures of the event [here](#).



Signature: Tunisian Minister of Health, HE Sonia Ben Cheikh, and Tunisian Minister of Agriculture, Water Resources and Fisheries, HE Samir Taïeb

Tunisia's engagement in the fight against AMR is in line with the call launched by the United Nations General Assembly through the adoption of a political declaration on 26 September 2016 aimed at combating the global threat posed by AMR and confirming the necessity of a One Health approach in this regard. The declaration was supported by all three Directors General of the Tripartite collaboration – OIE, WHO and FAO. Similarly, the commitment of Tunisia to combating rabies is consistent with the Zero by 30 Global Strategic Plan developed by the OIE, FAO, WHO and the Global Alliance for Rabies Control (GARC).

A closer look at AMR

The elaboration of the joint national action plan to fight **AMR** was the result of a two-year process started in 2017 and concluded in 2019. Progress was achieved through dedicated inter-sectoral working groups, which included all stakeholders operating in the field. The OIE Sub-Regional Representation for North Africa participated in this process to provide guidance in line with the principles of both OIE international standards and the OIE strategy on AMR and the prudent use of antimicrobials. FAO and WHO offices in Tunisia also participated in the development of the plan.

A closer look at rabies

Tunisia has also been proactive in the past few years in relation to rabies prevention, control and awareness activities. In addition, it has benefitted from the project funded by the European Union, 'Strengthening Veterinary Services in Developing Countries', which included a rabies component (SVSDC+R). The main actions conducted by the Tunisian Government on rabies are summarised as follows:

- Applied for and received four sets of vaccine donations through the OIE Vaccine Bank to facilitate national vaccination campaigns (80,000 doses in 2016; 200,000 doses in 2017; 300,000 doses in 2018 and 300,000 doses in 2019);
- Established two vaccination centres, one at the Veterinary School of Sidi Thabet and the other at the Municipality of Tunis;
- Held two workshops, in May and September of 2017, dedicated to the management of stray dog populations, mainly focused on capture techniques. These workshops were organised by the Veterinary Authority and the Municipality of Tunis in collaboration with the OIE Sub-Regional Representation for North Africa;
- Established the first permanent municipal centre (in Tunis) for the sterilisation, identification and vaccination of stray dogs.

Tunisia also participated in the annual World Rabies Day Awards, and was shortlisted for an award in 2017 and won an award in 2018. Furthermore, Tunisia regularly organises activities during the **World Rabies Day** to better sensitise and involve citizens in the fight against rabies.



Conclusion

These engagements represent the foundation of the political willingness in Tunisia to fight AMR and rabies. They will, therefore, pave the way for the implementation of new concrete activities in the field as well as the reinforcement of inter-sectoral collaboration at both the ministerial and operational field levels in the prevention of public health crises. In addition, Tunisia's commitment could act as a positive motivator for other countries in the North African region so the region could move forward in a harmonised way to attain global objectives.

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