

*The Regional Representation for the Americas – our experience in organising
the 88th virtual OIE General Session*



Participants and coordinators of the meeting of the Regional Commission for the Americas, May 2021

The General Session has always been, for all of us in the Organisation, the most anticipated event of the year. It involves a lot of work, but it also brings countless opportunities to organise bilateral meetings, to meet face-to-face with our counterparts from around the world, coordinate strategies and share moments of camaraderie. Just a few years ago, it would have been difficult for any of us ever to have imagined a virtual General Session, but like the rest of the Organisation, we had to quickly adapt. The organisation of the Regional Commission for the Americas Conference was a great example of adapting to the fully virtual format.

Our region, with its enormous and rich diversity, is characterised by being vibrant and bustling, proactive and driven, and especially expressive. On more than one occasion, we exceeded the time allowed for our regional meeting because of the lively and rich debates. Limiting these spontaneous debates and restructuring the meeting to maintain this spirit, with all that it implies, has been a great challenge.

Adapting to the virtual format was different for everyone, and this was a factor in making sure that the needs of all participants were met, and that all Delegates and their technical and support teams had smooth access to the different meetings planned.

Part of the behind-the-scenes work was the training of Delegates and their teams in the use of new IT applications, such as the online platforms for commenting, adopting rules and voting for candidates.

In the end, the meeting was a success. We can think of no better example of teamwork than the behind-the-scenes coordination of the Regional and Sub-Regional Representations of the Americas and the Department of Regional Activities and the Events Coordination Unit, so that the meeting ran according to plan.

The Regional Commission meeting on Monday, 24 May 2021 was attended by 80 participants, including Delegates and observers from 28 Members, as well as representatives from ten international and regional organisations, and true to the structure of previous years, had a closed session for Delegates.

The virtual meeting addressed the outcomes of the 25th Regional Conference for the Americas, proposed three strategic topics of global interest to the OIE, and confirmed the venue and Technical Theme for the next Conference, which we hope can be held in person in Cuzco, Peru.

Although it undeniably took a lot of coordination, we believe that we were all left with a great sense of satisfaction with the success of the meeting, while at the same time learning valuable lessons and adaptive tricks, which we will not hesitate to use in the future.

No doubt that these experiences will allow us to organise the next Regional Conferences and other events in a different way, they will never be the same, but they will certainly be better!

We wish to thank our colleagues from the Americas Region for submitting this article to the OIE In-house Times.

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