

**Welcome Remarks by Prof Ahmed Elsayalhy, Director of AU-IBAR, during the Launch and the Opening of the Inception Workshop of the Standard Methods and Procedures in Animal Health (SMP-AH) project, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 27TH AUGUST 2012**

- Her Excellency, the Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture,
- Deputy Mission Director of the United States Agency for International Development in Eastern Africa,
- Representatives of USAID Missions in East Africa, Kenya and Ethiopia,
- Representatives of our Technical Partners, OIE and FAO,
- Representatives of IGAD, COMESA and EAC,
- Distinguished Guests, Colleagues, Ladies and Gentlemen

Let me take this opportunity to thank you all for accepting our invitation to participate in this meeting. I wish to express my sincere gratitude to the Commissioner of Rural Economy and Agriculture, Her Excellency, Madame Rhoda Peace Tumusiime for setting time aside to grace the official launch and opening of the Inception workshop for the Standard Methods and Procedures in animal Health (SMP-AH) project. Madame Commissioner, thank you. I also wish, to sincerely thank the Government and people of America through USAID for providing funds to support this important initiative in the IGAD region. I take this opportunity to thank the USAID officials present, for having created time to be with us for the four days of the workshop. Please accept our sincere appreciation.

Distinguished guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, the Horn of Africa is endowed with a vast animal resource and it is estimated that it is the home to 119 million cattle, 209 million sheep and goats, and 14 million camels. The contribution of the livestock sectors to livelihoods, food security and national economies is enormous. Trade in livestock and livestock products is an important commerce between the Horn of Africa countries and the Middle East and also substantial intra-regional cross-border trade of live animals also occurs among the Horn of Africa countries.

However, livestock production and trade in the horn of Africa is faced with many challenges that hinder the full exploitation of the animal resources. For example, in the drier parts of the Horn of Africa which is home to 70% of livestock population and where pastoralism is the main mode of production some of the challenges experienced include poor infrastructure, drought, conflicts, animal diseases and low investments by public and private sectors. This state of affair make pastoral communities vulnerable to drought as was recently experienced in 2011 when the region was hit by the worst drought in 60 years and 13 million people were in humanitarian crises.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we may not be able to avoid drought and other natural disasters in the Horn of Africa, and with climate change we may continue to expect more frequent and protracted droughts. The drought, especially, will have impacts on availability of pasture, water, deplete livestock and erode the pastoralist's livelihoods leading to conflicts with attendance social impacts. It is therefore important for stakeholders to work towards long –term interventions in livestock production and trade, among other interventions, to build resilience of the pastoral communities to future droughts to avoid famine situations.

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, in this regard AU-IBAR, whose mandate is to support and coordinate the utilization of livestock, fisheries and wildlife as resources for both human wellbeing and economic development in the Members States of the African Union (AU) has committed to address all aspects of livestock production and trade, especially in pastoral systems, in its 2010-2014 strategic plan.

In summary the six strategic programmes of the strategic plan aims to;

- Catalyse the management of TADs & Zoonoses in Africa;
- Catalyse the development of policies and actions that will lead to sustainable use and management of animal resources and the natural resource base on which they depend;
- Improve public investment in animal resources in Africa and enhance the competitiveness of the animal products at national, regional and global levels;

- Promote the development of, and compliance with Standards and Regulations;
- Improve Knowledge Management in animal resources to facilitate timely decision making
- Facilitate development of policies and Institutional capacities for improved utilization of animal resources in Africa

To achieve the objectives of the strategic plan, AU-IBAR with support of technical and development partners is currently implementing a number of interventions to promote animal resources management and trade. During the course of this workshop, we will share with you the details of the interventions, especially those being implemented in the IGAD region. The interventions include;

- Reinforcing Veterinary Governance in Africa (VETGOV);
- Integrated Coordination Mechanism (IRCM) for TADs and Zoonoses;
- Participation of African countries in standards setting organisations (PANSPSO);
- Pan African Forum for Livestock Exporting Countries (PAFLEC) and
- Animal Resources Information System (ARIS)

Ladies and gentlemen, today marks a very important milestone for AU-IBAR, IGAD and IGAD member states as we launch the Standard Methods and Procedures in Animal Health project. The SMP-AH project aims to address the challenge posed by TADs in the IGAD region. TADs have major impacts on animal health, public health, livelihoods, food security and national economies and are a shared concern for IGAD Member states as outbreaks of these diseases, even in one country, have previously resulted in blanket bans on trade of livestock and livestock products from the region.

However, despite the huge impacts TADs have on the livestock industry the veterinary Services of the IGAD member States do not have adequate capacity to effectively counteract these impacts given their weak animal disease surveillance systems at the national level, lack of coordination and harmonisation of disease surveillance and

control programs at the regional level and the low investments to support diseases surveillance and control.

There is therefore need to turn this situation around, and the SMP-AH project is timely as it will be addressing the gaps in disease surveillance and control and will specifically be addressing the following critical areas:

- Standardization of disease surveillance and control procedures
- Strengthening of disease surveillance and control at national levels
- Coordination of surveillance and disease control at regional level
- Developing laboratory and diagnostic capacity
- Enhancing information sharing on TADs with stakeholders including trading partners
- Strengthening traders organization at regional level to promote intraregional trade in livestock and livestock products

I now call upon you to clearly analyse these critical areas, identify critical gaps and define corresponding activities or inputs necessary to fill the gaps.

I urge you to develop activities that will have real impact on the beneficiaries of the project, particularly the pastoralists. Sustainability is a key element of projects IBAR and partners implement and urge you to build in sustainability strategies in the proposed activities and always keeping in mind the need to build on the existing systems in the members states with OIE standards as the guiding principle.

Ladies and gentlemen, you have a golden opportunity in your hands to make a difference in the livestock sectors and people in the IGAD region. I therefore look forward to very intensive discussions to agree on the activities required to achieve the desired project results and to clearly define the role and responsibilities for the stakeholders during implementation.

I once thank you for your participation and once again thank USAID for supporting this project. I wish you fruitful workshop. **Thank you**