

EUROPEAN UNION INTERVENTION (DAY 1) OF GENEVA MEETING 7 - 9 NOVEMBER 2005

Day 1: Status of International Health and Country Responses

If spoken: I have the honour to take the floor on behalf of the 25 members of the European Union. The acceding countries Bulgaria and Romania align themselves with this statement.

- The EU welcomes this important event and its aims and sincerely hopes that there will be concrete, next steps that will move us all forward both in the short-term, and over the medium to long term.
- Combating the avian influenza and preparing for a flu pandemic threat is a political, social economic, agricultural and health priority. It requires an international co-ordinated response within a structured framework.
- We agree on the importance of acting within the framework of the relevant multilateral organisations (FAO, OIE, WHO, the World Bank, the regional development banks), recognising the importance of inputs from regional coordination and support mechanisms and working closely with the UN System Co-ordinator for avian influenza, in order to provide a harmonised and coordinated global response.
- We welcome the emphasis on the needs of developing countries in order to assist them in combating the disease in poultry and the animal sphere in general and preparing for and being able to cope with any human pandemic outbreak.
- Following the recent international meetings now is rightly the time to focus on ensuring effective international co-ordination at the operational level:
 - by highlighting what is currently being done, and what needs to be done.
 - by stressing that avian influenza is primarily an animal disease that requires a veterinarian response
 - by emphasizing the need to act rapidly to control avian influenza at source in animals and bring economic support to the regions and farms which encounter the disease
 - by developing a long-term strong, global and ambitious public health and surveillance program in order to ensure full preparedness
 - by supporting capacity building, information campaigns and planning in all countries through appropriate national and international investments
 - by establishing a road map for preparation of outstanding plans and a prioritised action plan for implementation, progressing the work developed in the May 2005 FAO/OIE/WHO strategy paper: *The Global Strategy for the Progressive Control of Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza* to concrete action.
- We would welcome a meeting outcome that provides a practical framework which will synthesise the significant amounts of work already underway or planned in individual countries, at regional level and globally, but will also highlight where additional scientific and operational initiatives are required.

- The effectiveness of the international response depends on working closely together; all countries should therefore maintain open and immediate communications on outbreaks of avian influenza or human infections. This will be especially vital if a human pandemic virus starts to emerge.
- This meeting should urgently address the short-term issues that require rapid support and response. We must rise to this challenge. But actions should be:
 - Measured and proportionate,
 - properly governed and coordinated
 - based on the best scientific evidence available
- While responding urgently to immediate needs, we should also act to strengthen preparedness and response capacity for the medium and long term to ensure that as and when a human pandemic virus emerges we are as well prepared as possible to minimise its impact on all countries.

Conclusion

- It is time to convert political priorities into operational plans
- This meeting is key to progressing these aims in a co-ordinated and effective manner, and in moving us forward.