



Mission_SOP

Standard Operating Procedure on the deployment of expert missions to Members related to official animal health status recognition or official control programmes endorsement

Description/ Scope:	<p>This procedure describes the process for the request, preparation, and deployment of expert missions to Member related to official animal health status recognition or official control programmes endorsement.</p> <p>The subprocess for the deployment of expert mission fits in the overall Official Status Recognition Process.</p> <p>Virtual interviews may be considered when applicable in the place of a field mission.</p>
Related documents	<p>Expert Mission Deployment - Guidelines¹ (annexed)</p> <p>Resolution No. 15 of the 2020 Adapted Procedure</p> <p>Resolution No.16 of the 2020 Adapted Procedure</p>
Related processes	<p>Official Status Recognition Process</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Procedure (Application_SOP)- Application_Guidelines <p>Reconfirmation of a Status or Programme</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Procedure (Reconfirmation_SOP)- Reconfirmation_Guidelines <p>Suspension, Recovery and Withdrawal</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Procedure (Suspension_SOP)- Suspension_Guidelines <p>Addendum: Establishment of a protection zone</p>
List of acronyms:	<p>AHG: <i>ad hoc</i> Group</p> <p>Assembly: World Assembly of Delegates</p> <p>DDG: Deputy Director General, Standards and Science</p> <p>DG: Director General</p> <p>SD: Status Department</p> <p>SCAD: Scientific Commission for Animal Diseases</p> <p>TORs: Terms of Reference</p>

Step	Time Reference	Responsible person	Action	Reference Document
1.		SD / SCAD	Drafts TOR of the requested mission, or virtual interviews when applicable, and lists the experts relevant for the mission/virtual interviews. Sends to DG.	
2.		DG	Selects experts and validate the TORs.	
3.		SD	Checks experts' interest and availability and requests confidentiality undertaking and declaration of interest.	
4.		Selected experts	Confirm their participation indicating their availability. Provide confidentiality undertaking and declaration of interest.	

¹ To clarity, this will be referred to as « Mission Guidelines »

5.		DG	<p>Sends letter informing the Member of the identified need to conduct an on-site mission or virtual interviews including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TORs of the expert team; - names of selected experts; - proposal of dates for the mission/virtual interviews; <p>and requesting approval for the mission/virtual interviews and informing that the costs are to be defrayed by the Member.</p> <p>Requests RR or SRR's support when relevant.</p>	
6.		Delegate	<p>Receives the letter and responds to WOAHA:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the Member does not agree to host the mission, see step 7; - If the Member agrees to host the mission, see step 9. 	Point B.2 Mission Guidelines
7.		SD/DG	<p>Explore alternatives to enable the mission and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If mission is not feasible, see step 8; - If mission is feasible, see step 9. 	
8.		SD	<p>Informs SCAD President of the impossibility to carry out a mission.</p>	
8.1		DG	<p>Sends letter notifying the Member that the Scientific Commission will not be able to finalise its assessment and to make an informed decision for its recommendation to the Assembly; see step 12.</p>	
9.		Delegate	<p>Selects between dates or proposes other availability. Nominates a Contact Point to liaise with the SD and organise the mission/virtual interviews. Confirms funds availability.</p>	Point D.1. Mission Guidelines
9.1		SD	<p>Confirms dates of the mission/virtual interviews with the experts.</p>	
9.2		SD / Member	<p>For missions/virtual interviews related to the recognition of animal health status and endorsement of official control programmes, considers whether - pending the mission's outcome - the application is to be kept confidential or can be included provisionally in the list of recommended status recognition for countries or zones which is released to all Delegates 60 days prior to the General Session.</p>	Point B.4 Mission Guidelines
9.3		SD	<p>Prepares the list of Members proposed for official recognition to be circulated to all Delegates, specifying the Members with provisional recommendation of adoption (cf. Application_SOP step 36).</p>	
9.4		Mission contact point / RR or SRR	<p>Prepares and sends draft itinerary of the mission or agenda of the virtual interviews to SD.</p>	Point D.1. Mission Guidelines

9.5		SD / President of the SCAD/ Mission contact point	Review the draft itinerary of the mission or agenda of the virtual interviews.	
9.6		DG/Delegate	Endorse the itinerary of the mission or agenda of the virtual interviews.	
9.7		Expert Team	Carries out the mission/virtual	Point D.2 Mission Guidelines
9.8	Within 3 weeks after completion of mission/virtual interviews	Expert Team leader	Provides a detailed draft report to WOH.	
9.9		SD	Revises the draft report for compliance with TORs, and sends to DDG/DG.	
9.10		DG	Reviews the draft report for recommendations made to WOH and sends it to Member for information and comments.	
9.11		Delegate	Review the report and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the Delegate has comments on the report, provides them to WOH and see step 9.12; - If the Delegate has no comments, endorses the report and see step 9.14. 	
9.12		SD	Prepares final report taking into account comments made and sends final report to the DG and DDG for information.	
9.13		DG	Sends final report to Delegate.	
9.14		SD	Sends report to the SCAD President.	
9.15		Budget Unit	Prepares an invoice for the Member to reimburse WOH on the cost of the mission/virtual interviews.	
9.16		DG	Sends the invoice to Delegate.	
9.17		President of the SCAD	Decides whether to study the report at physical meeting or through electronic consultation.	
9.18		SCAD	Assesses the report and provides final recommendation; and: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the outcome is positive, see step 9.19; - If the outcome is negative, see step 9.20; 	

9.19		DG	<p>Sends a letter reporting on the mission/virtual interviews and informing the Member of the positive outcome, and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the Member was temporarily included in the current year's list, see step 10; - If the Member was not temporarily included in the list, see step 11. 	
9.20		DG	<p>Sends a letter reporting on the mission/virtual interviews and informing the Member of the negative outcome; and:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - If the Member was temporarily included in the current year's list, see step 12; - If the Member was not included in the list, end of procedure. 	
10.		DG	Confirms the inclusion of the Member in the current year's Resolution.	
11.		DG	Confirms the inclusion of the Member on the following year's list and requests that an update of the dossier be provided before the following February SCAD meeting.	
12.		DG	Removes the Member from the current year's Resolution.	

Mission_Guidelines

Guidelines for the deployment of expert missions to Members related to official animal health status recognition or official control programmes endorsement

A. Criteria for the deployment of an expert mission

1. Scope of the missions

The Scientific Commission may decide to recommend the Director General to deploy an expert mission to Members as part of:

- the evaluation of the Member's dossier (cf. Point D.5. of Application_Guidelines), including for recovery of status or evaluation of an official control programme;
- a mechanism to assess the maintenance over time of an officially recognised animal health status or of an endorsed official control programme (cf. Point C.3. Reconfirmation_Guidelines).

Depending on the Terms of Reference and specific objectives of a mission, the Scientific Commission may recommend that virtual interviews with the Member's Veterinary Services and other key stakeholders be conducted prior to or in place of a field mission. This alternative option will be considered on a case-by-case basis, also taking into account potential circumstances that may hinder deployment of a field mission (e.g., budget constraints, sanitary crisis, national insecurity, etc.). Notwithstanding, if a conclusion cannot be reached after virtual interviews have been conducted, the Scientific Commission may request that a field mission be deployed.

2. Criteria for consideration of a mission to an applicant Member

The Director General assesses if the situation fills in the criteria for a mission and possibly prioritises the different missions, evaluating whether:

- not enough evidence was provided in the dossier to verify compliance with the provisions of the *Terrestrial Animal Health Code (Terrestrial Code)* for the control of the particular disease, regarding :
 - o the transparency of annual disease reporting to WOA;H;
 - o the capability of the Veterinary Services to maintain the status overtime;
 - o the implementation and effectiveness of the measures presented in the dossiers (unorthodox approaches for disease control, verification of information presented in dossier);
 - o the surveillance implemented to substantiate disease freedom;
 - o the system to prevent the introduction of the pathogens and the contingency/emergency plans in case of their introduction;
 - o the implementation and effectiveness of the animal identification system and of the control of animal movement, in particular in case of a zoning approach;
 - o the effectiveness of the ruminant-to-ruminant feed ban for BSE risk status;
- discrepancies are apparent within the information presented in the dossier or between the dossier and other available information (e.g. publicly available reports and information, knowledge from regional experts, etc.) and they cannot be solved through written communication.

A mission may also be considered when the Member extends an invitation for such a mission, in order to substantiate its application and when there are indications that the situation may be better than what was expressed in the dossier and/or when a need has been identified to resolve a misunderstanding of the WOAH requirements.

As an alternative to field missions, virtual interviews may be proposed to be conducted with the applicant Member's Veterinary Services and other key stakeholders to further clarify issues arising from the application that may impact the conclusion of the assessment.

Specific missions may also be proposed to Members that have applied several times with negative outcomes, to support them in identifying and fixing the gaps.

3. Criteria for consideration of a maintenance monitoring mission

In the case of the maintenance of an officially recognised animal health status, a mission may be considered if:

- available information indicates that the Member may not be fully compliant anymore with the provisions of the *Terrestrial Code* for the control of the particular disease, regarding for example:
 - o transparency of animal disease reporting to WOAH;
 - o capability of the Veterinary Services to maintain the status or to implement the official control programme;
 - o the system to prevent the introduction of the pathogen, including animal movement control and emergency systems.
- the Scientific Commission wishes to monitor the follow-up of recommendations given by experts;

In the case of the maintenance of the validation of an official control programme, a mission may be considered to:

- o verify continuous compliance with the timelines and performance indicators of the programme;
- o assess whether or not an apparent increase in the incidence of the concerned disease can be addressed by the programme.

As an alternative to a field mission, virtual interviews may be considered to be conducted with the Member's Veterinary Services and other key stakeholders to further clarify issues arising from the annual reconfirmations that may impact the maintenance of the allocated animal health status or progress of the official control programme.

B. Approval and communication on the mission

1. Cost of the mission

The travel and accommodation costs of the expert mission are to be defrayed by the Member concerned in accordance with Resolution No. 16 of the 2020 Adapted Procedure. The experts do not receive an honorarium. In case of virtual interviews, interpretation costs (when needed), and remote attendance allowance of experts² are to be defrayed by the Member concerned.

² WOAH Director General's Memorandum NS 2020/2 of 1 September 2020.

The Director General approves the advance on costs; after the mission or virtual interviews, the Delegate receives an invoice and the Member reimburses WOAAH for the cost of the mission (i.e., international flight tickets, *per-diem*, interpretation costs, remote attendance allowance of experts, as applicable).

In the case where the Member cannot sustain the cost of the mission, WOAAH may provide support in exploring alternative sources of funding.

2. Approval of the mission

Members may accept or refuse to host a proposed mission or virtual interviews. In the case where a Member does not accept to host the mission or virtual interviews, the Scientific Commission will not be able to finalise its assessment and to make an informed decision to recommend WOAAH World Assembly of Delegates (hereafter the Assembly). As a consequence:

- the Scientific Commission will not be able to recommend the potential official recognition of the Member's animal health status or to approve its status recovery; or to recommend the potential endorsement of its official control programme;
- the Scientific Commission will not be able to recommend the maintenance of the Member on the relevant Resolution listing the Members and zones with an animal health status or the Members with an endorsed official control programme at the forthcoming General Session. To this end, the official animal health status of the concerned Member may be suspended or the endorsement of a official control programme be withdrawn.

3. Communication to the Assembly

For those Members that accept to host the mission, the calendar has to be carefully considered when selecting the dates of the mission, especially when the mission is deployed to finalise the assessment of the application for animal health status recognition or official control programme endorsement. Taking into consideration that the list of Members and zones for which the Scientific Commission has recommended to recognise an official animal health status or to endorse an official control programme at the forthcoming General Session has to be circulated to all Delegates at least 60 days prior to the General Session (cf. Point D of Application_SOP), there are three possibilities:

- i) Experts are available to conduct the mission before the General Session to possibly allow the recognition of the animal health status or the endorsement of the official control programme at the following General Session.
 - If the Member wishes to **keep its application confidential** until the mission is conducted, WOAAH will not be able to include the Member or zone on the list to be announced to all Delegates for consideration and comments.

If the outcome of the mission supports the official recognition of the Member or zone, it will be proposed for adoption at the General Session of the subsequent year, provided that i) there had been no disease outbreaks or significant change in the epidemiological situation since its application; ii) an updated dossier has been provided to WOAAH.

- If the Member agrees to **lift the confidentiality** on its application, its name will be provisionally included in the list released for potential official recognition at the forthcoming General Session. If the outcome of the mission is satisfactory, this will allow the Member or zone to be officially recognised at the forthcoming General Session. However, if the outcome of the mission is not satisfactory, the Member will be delisted from the proposal while the identity of the Member or zone would already have been released.

- ii) Experts are not available to conduct the mission before the forthcoming General Session and therefore, the evaluation will be considered pending to the mission, for possible recognition of the animal health status or the endorsement of the official control programme at the subsequent General Session.

The applicant Member will not be included on the list to be announced to all Delegates and the application will remain confidential until the outcome of the mission.

However, an evaluation cannot be put on hold for more than one year and if a mission cannot be conducted before the subsequent General Session, it will be concluded that the Scientific Commission cannot make an informed decision to recommend the Member for official recognition of its animal health status or for potential endorsement of its official control programme. To achieve the desired animal health status or the endorsement of its official control programme, the Member will have to re-apply.

C. Selection of experts for the mission

1. Team composition

The Expert team is normally composed of at least two WOAHA experts on the relevant disease, who may be accompanied by WOAHA regional or sub-regional representative and an officer from the Status Department in charge of that particular disease.

While WOAHA experts are responsible for the assessment of the Member compliance with the requirements of the *Terrestrial Code*, the officer ensures that the Terms of Reference of the mission and the present procedure are respected.

2. Criteria for the selection of experts

The selection of the WOAHA experts depends on:

- their domain of expertise (laboratory, epidemiology, control programmes, ...);
- their knowledge of the regional epidemiology of the disease;
- their understanding of WOAHA mandates and standards, in particular with regard to official status recognition and endorsement of official control programme;
- their availability.

Experts are requested to fill in and sign a confidentiality undertaking and declaration of interest. To avoid any conflict of interest, experts having the citizenship of the visited or interviewed Member are not selected. Moreover, neither members of the SCAD nor members of the *ad hoc* Group which will assess the dossier can be selected as experts for such missions or virtual interviews.

D. Preparation and deployment of the mission

1. Preparation of the mission programme

Members are requested to nominate a Contact Point who will be in charge of organising the mission or virtual interviews and liaising with the Status Department throughout the process.

The draft itinerary, prepared by the Member with the possible support of the Regional Representative or Sub-Regional Representative, should be based on the TORs provided by WOAHA and entail:

- a day-by-day programme,
- the locations/facilities to visit or relevant stakeholders for soliciting information,

- sufficient time for a final debriefing with the Veterinary Services on the last day of the mission.

The itinerary must be sent to WOAHA (disease.status@woah.org) and endorsed by WOAHA Director General and the President of the Scientific Commission to allow the deployment of the mission.

In case of virtual interviews, a day-by-day agenda for the virtual meetings must be prepared and sent by the Member and endorsed by WOAHA. It is suggested to dedicate one full day to each area to be evaluated and to group all stakeholders related to each topic accordingly to optimise the time management of the interviews. At the end of each day, the experts will have a debriefing meeting to identify areas where more information is needed, so that any additional questions are forwarded to the Member in due time.

2. Deployment of the mission

The logistics aspects of the organisation of the missions will be further discussed between the Member Contact Point and the Status Department. The concerned Member is requested to fully cooperate with WOAHA Headquarters and the expert team, to allow access to fields/facilities as necessary, and provide all information requested.

E. Outcome of the mission

1. Mission report

A detailed report of the mission or virtual interviews is to be provided to the Director General (disease.status@woah.org) by the mission leader three weeks upon return, if not specified otherwise, and should include:

- the main findings of the mission or virtual interviews;
- elements and conclusions addressing the Terms of reference;
- recommendations to the Member, to WOAHA and to the Scientific Commission on the conclusions of the expert team.

In the case of a mission (or virtual interview) prior to the possible recommendation of granting an official status, the time of the General Session should be taken into account. The expert team should have enough time to provide clear recommendations to SCAD upon completion.

The Delegate of the concerned Member will be provided with the report for information and possible comments. Reports are drafted in English and translated into French or Spanish as necessary.

The final report considering the Member's comments is sent back to the Delegate and provided to the President of the Scientific Commission who decides, depending on the situation and on the calendar, whether the report should be considered by the Scientific Commission at its next physical/virtual meeting or through electronic consultation. Should the available time between the end of the mission or virtual interviews, and the General Session be too short to ensure this process, the draft report may be communicated to the Scientific Commission before validation of the finalised version with prior notification to the Member. The Delegate is informed of the Scientific Commission's decision.

The missions deployed or virtual interviews conducted are presented at the General Session by the President of the Scientific Commission (cf. Application_SOP).

2. Additional information

Depending on the recommendations of the mission or virtual interviews, the Member could be requested to provide additional/updated information after the mission by an appointed deadline. The Scientific Commission may also request another mission in the future to follow-up on the recommendations made by the expert team.