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Terms of Reference for the Quadripartite Technical Group on Antimicrobial Resistance and Use Integrated Surveillance (QTG-AIS)

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These Terms of Reference for the Quadripartite technical group¹ on antimicrobial resistance and use (AMR/U) integrated surveillance (QTG-AIS) are agreed to by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) (collectively referred to as the “**Quadripartite**”). The Quadripartite Joint Secretariat on AMR (**QJS**), which consolidates cooperation between FAO, UNEP, WHO and WOAH to coordinate the global One Health response to AMR, will have oversight of the QTG-AIS through its Senior Management Group (**QJS SMG**). The QJS will provide overall secretariat support for the QTG-AIS.

Background

1. Antimicrobial resistance (AMR) is a global animal and public health threat. Its main drivers are the inappropriate use of antimicrobials in human, animal, and plant health, food production, and environmental contamination². Effective efforts to tackle AMR must therefore be anchored to a One Health/inter-sectoral approach. In this regard, the Quadripartite, through the QJS, supports the global AMR response across the One Health spectrum through global advocacy and political engagement, the creation of a shared vision and goals, and providing secretariat services for global governance structures
2. Effective surveillance of AMR/U across sectors is an integral part of efforts to monitor the spread and impact of AMR. Good surveillance data is important for decision and policy making, and to track progress made towards the set goals. Data generated from different sectors need to be harmonized, representative, illustrative and standardized to allow for their comparability and meaningful interpretation. Indeed, many countries are working to develop systems for integrated surveillance³. Others are rolling out systems based on the Tricycle protocol for surveillance of extended spectrum beta-lactamase-producing *Escherichia coli* (ESBL-*E. coli*) across human and animal health, and the environment. Furthermore, around 160 countries are collecting and reporting data on antimicrobials intended for use in animals (AMU) on a yearly basis⁴. Additionally, [the Global Leaders Group on AMR \(GLG\)](#) Workplan also includes One Health-based AMR/U integrated surveillance as a key priority area.
3. An expert working group is required to provide advice and guidance on the development of global and context-appropriate regional and country-level systems for integrated surveillance and the establishment of effective capacities.

¹ For FAO purposes, the term “*Technical Group*” is interpreted to reflect a “*panel of experts*” established with a view to developing consultations with leading technicians in fields of activity of the Organization, as contemplated under Article VI, paragraph 4 of the FAO Constitution.

² World Health Organization. (2019). No time to Wait: Securing the future from drug-resistant infections. Interagency Coordination Group on Antimicrobial Resistance Report to the Secretary General of the United Nations. <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/no-time-to-wait-securing-the-future-from-drug-resistant-infections>

³ Global Leaders Group on Antimicrobial resistance Priorities of the Global Leaders Group. Rolling Action Plan. January 2022 Version.

⁴ <https://www.oie.int/en/what-we-do/global-initiatives/antimicrobial-resistance/#ui-id-3>

I. Functions

4. The role of the QTG-AIS will be to provide strategic and technical advice and/or inputs to the Quadripartite and the GLG.
5. The specific functions of the QTG-AIS will be to:
 - (a) provide advice to the Quadripartite on the needs, scope and format for AMR/U integrated surveillance and how it should be updated to reflect emerging evidence and experiences; and advocate for covering identified gaps;
 - (b) review and refine the current definition of 'integrated surveillance' and agree on priority needs in different contexts;
 - (c) provide technical advice to the Quadripartite on issues emerging from regional and country-level work on AMR/U integrated surveillance;
 - (d) provide strategic advice and input to the GLG on AMR/U integrated surveillance; and
 - (e) provide technical support and/or assistance via the Quadripartite to build regional and country-level integrated AMR/U surveillance capabilities.

II. Composition

6. The QTG-AIS will be composed of up to thirty-five (35) experts who are working on AMR/U integrated surveillance or have worked in more than one sector (human health, and terrestrial and/or aquatic animal health, food safety and food production, plant health, and the environment) and/or led national and supranational work on analysis and use of data across sectors. Previous experience working on similar technical groups at national or international levels will be an asset.
7. The composition of the QTG-AIS should reflect the surveillance needs across the One Health spectrum: from animal, human and plant health, food and feed production and the environment. The QTG-AIS will include a sector-balanced representation of surveillance experts.
8. Specifically, the following experts will be considered for the QTG-AIS experts; microbiologists, epidemiologists, public health practitioners, health scientists, veterinary scientists, food systems experts, agriculture experts, environmental scientists, plant production/protection experts, microbial geneticists, molecular biologists, microbial genomics experts, computational biologists, bioinformaticians, data scientists or other relevant disciplines who have experience working with or in low and/or middle-income countries as per the World Bank classification.
9. Members of the QTG-AIS shall be appointed to serve for a staggered period of two (2) or three (3) years and shall be eligible for reappointment. QTG-AIS experts will be eligible to be appointed as Chairperson but are only permitted to serve in this role for one (1) term. Their appointment and/or designation as Chairperson may be terminated at any time by the Quadripartite if their interest so requires or in accordance with the terms of the relevant letter of appointment. Where a Chairperson's appointment is terminated, the Quadripartite will appoint a replacement Chairperson.
10. QTG-AIS experts, and its Chairperson, shall be selected and/or appointed by the Quadripartite following an open call for experts. The Chairperson's functions include the following:
 - (a) to chair the meetings of the QTG-AIS;
 - (b) to liaise with the QJS between meetings.

Duration

11. The QTG-AIS will be established for a duration of up to five (5) years. To ensure continuity, QTG-AIS experts shall be appointed to serve for a staggered period of two (2) or three (3) years.

Selection process

12. The Quadripartite, through the QJS, will issue a joint open call to select QTG-AIS experts.
13. Additional experts may be considered from a roster or by a new open call as required.
14. QTG-AIS experts will have international experience and having worked on similar technical group at national or international levels will be an asset.
15. The QTG-AIS experts shall serve in their personal capacities. In the selection of the QTG-AIS experts, consideration shall be given to attaining an adequate distribution of technical expertise, geographical representation and gender balance.

Accountability

16. The QTG-AIS will be accountable to the QJS SMG and provide advice to the GLG as required. The QJS SMG will regularly review the progress and provide feedback to the QTG-AIS. The QTG-AIS will regularly report through its Chairperson to the QJS SMG and the GLG through invitations to meetings and written meeting reports, as appropriate.
17. Reports of each QTG-AIS meeting containing its recommendations shall be addressed to the QJS SMG.

Guiding Principles

18. The QTG-AIS will not have any separate legal identity.
19. The QTG-AIS will attempt to build consensus in the performance of the specified functions and advocate for the generalized adoption and advise on appropriate approaches and data platforms.
20. QTG-AIS experts must respect the impartiality and independence required of the Quadripartite. In performing their work, QTG-AIS experts may not seek or accept instructions from any government or authority external to the Quadripartite. They must be free of any real, potential or apparent conflicts of interest. To this end, proposed experts shall be required to complete a declaration of interests form and their appointment and/or re-appointment shall be subject to the evaluation of completed forms by the QJS and a committee selected from members of the Quadripartite, determining that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.
21. Following a determination that a proposed QTG-AIS expert's participation in the QTG-AIS would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest, the proposed expert will be sent a letter inviting them to be an expert of the QTG-AIS. Their appointment to the QTG-AIS is subject to the Quadripartite receiving the countersigned invitation letter and an affirmative letter in reply. Notwithstanding the requirement to complete the declaration of interest form, QTG-AIS experts have an ongoing obligation to inform the Quadripartite of any interests that may give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.
22. As contemplated in paragraph 21 above, the Quadripartite may, from time to time, request QTG-AIS experts to complete a new declaration of interest form. This may be before a QTG-AIS meeting or any other related activity or engagement, as decided by the Quadripartite. Where the Quadripartite has made such a request, the QTG-AIS experts' participation in the QTG-AIS activity or engagement is subject to a determination that their participation would not give rise to a real, potential or apparent conflict of interest.

23. QTG-AIS experts do not receive any remuneration from the Quadripartite for any work related to the QTG-AIS.

Key Objectives and Priority Deliverables for QTG-AIS

24. The key objectives and priority deliverables for the QTG-AIS will be to:

- (a) review the definition of AMR/U integrated surveillance and agree on priority needs in different contexts;
- (b) review current approaches and guidance on AMR/U integrated surveillance;
- (c) advise on which microbial indicators (i.e., pathogens, commensal, environmental) and resistance patterns should be prioritized to understand and monitor the AMR situation and transmission dynamics in different sectors and contexts;
- (d) advise on addressing the harmonization of protocols and adoption of international standards for AMR susceptibility tests for quality control purposes.
- (e) advise on the role of technologies, laboratory capacities and infrastructure (e.g., next generation sequencing, data management) in AMR surveillance systems, particularly in low and middle-income countries;
- (f) consider whether there is a need for formal Quadripartite guidance on integrated surveillance and, if so, propose the scope and format of such guidance; and
- (g) provide guidance to the Quadripartite and GLG on the financial viability of integrated surveillance programs in low and middle-income countries as per the World Bank classification.to ensure their sustainability.

III. Operation

25. The QTG-AIS shall meet at least bimonthly. However, the Quadripartite, through the QJS, may convene additional meetings. QTG-AIS meetings will be held virtually, via video or teleconference. No travel for QTG-AIS experts is anticipated.
26. QTG-AIS meetings may be held in open or closed sessions, as decided by the Chairperson in consultation with the QJS;
- (a) Open sessions: shall be convened for the sole purpose of the exchange of non-confidential information and views and may be attended by representatives of the Quadripartite and other relevant stakeholders.
 - (b) Closed sessions: sessions dealing with the formulation of recommendations and/or advice to the Quadripartite shall be restricted to the members of the QTG-AIS and representatives of the Quadripartite.
27. Surveillance experts from the Quadripartite will be invited as observers.
28. The quorum for meetings shall be two-thirds of the QTG-AIS experts.
29. The QTG-AIS may decide to establish smaller working groups (i.e., sub-groups of the QTG-AIS) to work on specific issues. Their deliberations shall take place via teleconference or videoconference. For these sub-groups, no quorum requirement will apply and the outcome of their deliberations will be submitted to the QTG-AIS for review at one of its meetings.
30. QTG-AIS experts are expected to attend meetings. If an expert misses two (2) consecutive meetings, the Quadripartite may end their appointment following consultations with the expert concerned.
31. Reports of each meeting and the final report shall be submitted by the QTG-AIS to the Quadripartite. All recommendations from the QTG-AIS are advisory to the Quadripartite, which retains full control

over any subsequent decisions or actions regarding any proposals, policy issues or other matters considered by the QTG-AIS.

32. The QTG-AIS shall normally make recommendations by consensus. If in exceptional circumstances a consensus on a particular issue cannot be reached, minority dissenting views from the majority may be reflected in the meeting report when requested by the expert(s) concerned.
33. Active participation is expected from all QTG-AIS experts, including in working groups, teleconferences, and interaction over email. QTG-AIS experts may, in advance of QTG meetings, be requested to review meeting documentation and to provide their views for consideration by the QTG-AIS.
34. The Quadripartite shall determine the modes of communication for the QTG-AIS.
35. The Quadripartite shall decide on the actions to be taken regarding any advice or recommendations made by the QTG-AIS. The outputs of the QTG-AIS are jointly owned by the Quadripartite. Without prejudice to the advisory nature of the QTG-AIS recommendations, regular updates of the activities of the QTG-AIS may be published on the Quadripartite organizations' websites and/or communicated to the public in other forms, as appropriate.
36. QTG-AIS members shall not speak on behalf of or represent the QTG-AIS or the Quadripartite to any third party.
37. The working language of the QTG-AIS will be English.

IV. Secretariat Support

38. The QJS will provide Secretariat support for the QTG-AIS. The QJS is hosted by WHO and has liaison officers from FAO, UNEP and WOAHA based in their respective organizations.

V. Information and documentation

39. Information and documentation to which QTG-AIS experts may gain access in performing QTG-AIS-related activities shall be considered confidential and proprietary to the Quadripartite. In addition, by countersigning the letter of appointment and the accompanying terms and conditions referred to in paragraph 21 above, QTG-AIS experts undertake to abide by the confidentiality obligations contained therein and also confirm that all rights in the work performed by them in connection with, or as a result of their QTG-AIS-related activities shall be exclusively vested in the four organizations.
40. QTG-AIS experts shall not quote from, circulate or use QTG-AIS documents for any purpose other than in a manner consistent with their responsibilities under these Terms of Reference.
41. The Quadripartite retain full control over the publication of the reports of the QTG-AIS.