

Closing remarks by Mette Gjerskov, Danish Minister of Food, Agriculture and Fisheries at the conference “Combating Antimicrobial resistance – Time for Joint Action”

Copenhagen, 15 March 2012

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am happy that I get this opportunity to take the floor again –

It allows me to stress once more the utmost importance of a joint effort if we are to tackle this AMR problem that we face.

As I said yesterday: People are dying out there!

We all know that bacterial resistance is a problem, we cannot solve overnight, but with a “One Health” approach – in a strong collaboration between countries and sectors – we are one step closer in achieving this goal.

During the last two days you have addressed the challenges of AMR – with great motivation

Yesterday you were presented with an overview of the seriousness of the situation concerning AMR –

You have listened to informative presentations and engaged in inspiring and animated discussions that have resulted in many good ideas on how to take action. Joint action.

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In the three workshops that have taken place today you have had the opportunity to discuss in depth the challenges in relation to three very important focus areas.

As the workshop rapporteurs have just told us, the debates in the workshops have been extremely interesting and very inspiring with much sharing of knowledge.

Many facts have come to light, for instance it has become clear that;

- Among the European countries there are big differences in how antibiotics are used and distributed,
- That we are in need of national guidelines for appropriate and prudent use of antibiotics,
- And that this work is already in process in many Member States.

In fact many countries already have action plans to promote appropriate antibiotic usage – this is good news.

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The Danish Presidency has emphasized the necessity that measures are to be taken to reduce the use of the so-called critically important antibiotics.

At this conference, I am pleased to have witnessed that our concern regarding the high usage of critically important antimicrobials is shared throughout the EU.

A common concern such as this is a first step towards action being taken.

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Also surveillance and the collection of accurate and comparable data on resistance and consumption are of major significance. Effective surveillance systems and data collection are fundamental for many good initiatives, and we need a good foundation to identify and target actions against overuse of antibiotics and antimicrobial resistance.

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If we are to effectively address the problems that we face because of antimicrobial resistance, we must also understand the barriers for finding and implementing solutions.

The five speakers who addressed the issue of “best practices” yesterday identified main barriers for taking action against antimicrobial resistance:

One of the barriers mentioned was a lack of awareness; another was the need for better surveillance and a third political management.

These barriers must be taken into account when we choose which appropriate actions should be taken in order to most effectively combat antimicrobial resistance.

At this conference so many good ideas and suggestions for possible actions to stop overuse of antibiotics and promote rational use have been brought into play. Let me highlight just a few:

- Surveillance – the need for a close monitoring of how many antimicrobials are used and the development of resistance.
- Awareness – It seems quite apparent that we have a communication problem in both the veterinary and the human health sectors.
- Raising awareness reduces the use of antibiotics. We all have a responsibility.

Addressing the challenges of AMR – taking actions at EU level as well as Member State level – it is all of paramount importance in order to ensure effective antibiotics in the future.

I hope you are all able to return home with some good ideas to work on.

And I cannot stress enough, how important it is that all countries join in the effort.



Fortunately the conference generated many intelligent and feasible ideas that we can continue to work with - during the remainder of the Danish Presidency and in the years to come.

Let me assure you: There is a direct link between the outcome of this conference and specific political action on the political level in the EU. What you have discussed will be presented for both the ministers of agriculture and the ministers of health in the two councils and we will have discussions on the basis of this.

Your recommendations will be heard.

I would like to thank each and every one of you for taking part in the discussions the past two days and for thoroughly inspiring each other with excellent ideas.

Let me finish by saying – It is time to take joint action!

Thank you.