Welcoming Address

Bojia E. Duguma (DVM, MSc), EVA's President

Distinguished Guests, Respected Colleagues, Senior Government Officials, Partners in the Veterinary Profession, Ladies and Gentlemen,

It is with great honor that I welcome you to the 38th Annual Conference of EVA. This year, we gather at a historic moment, Ethiopia has enacted the **Animal Health and Welfare Proclamation**, making animal health and welfare one of the national priorities. EVA has dedicated this assembly to celebrate this milestone and to help us translate the proclamation, actively engaging in shaping the forthcoming regulations and directives as it apply to your day-to-day deliberations.

Hence, the theme of the 38th Annual Conference is: **Reinforcing Animal Health and Welfare Regulatory Framework for Resilient Veterinary Systems in Ethiopia.**

For decades, animal health professionals have operated in an environment where **standards were inconsistent or absent**. For far too long, Ethiopia has lacked a **veterinary statutory body or council**, an independent authority with the legal mandate to regulate the profession, license practitioners, accredit training institutions, and enforce ethics and competency standards. The impact was an uneven system: clinics operated without meeting basic equipment and facility requirements, professionals practiced without proper licensing, refresher training, or legal immunity, universities trained students under varying curricula, some producing Doctors of Veterinary Medicine (**DVM**), others Bachelor of Veterinary Science (**BVS**). This inevitably raised concerns about the quality and consistency of our veterinary workforce.

The rationalization of veterinary services has long been at a crossroads, also awaiting the ratification of the Proclamation, which will lay a foundation for transitioning the public intensive vet services to public-private and private services, unlocking our full potential.

Nonetheless, as professionals, we have always served our society with unwavering dedication, sacrifice, and commitment. In the absence of legislation, we were unable to fully meet our obligations to protect animal welfare; even essential procedures like euthanasia were restricted, not by lack of skill or compassion, but by lack of legal coverage and resources. This left both veterinarians and animals vulnerable, limiting our ability to uphold ethical responsibilities.

Today, with the proclamation in place, this reality must change. Ethiopia now has the opportunity to set a new course: all veterinary professionals and facilities will be licensed, education programmes accredited, and ethics and service standards rigorously enforced, aligning our veterinary sector with the requirements of the World Organisation for Animal Health (WOAH) and the World Trade Organization's SPS measures.

The Proclamation provides Ethiopia with a coherent system to manage livestock from animal identification and traceability to humane transport, slaughter, disease surveillance, and veterinary

governance. It strengthens One Health, reduces zoonotic and antimicrobial risks, supports certifiable trade, and ensures accountable, modern veterinary services.

These benefits are not theoretical. They are measurable, practical, and vital for Ethiopia's development. By improving welfare and health, we increase productivity; by meeting global standards, we access more and better markets; by changing social attitudes, we secure lasting improvements for both animals and people.

The 38th Annual Conference comes right after our Golden Jubilee, which marked 50 years of achievement; it is not an ending but a springboard. We are building on that legacy, capitalizing on our successes, and moving forward with **a governance reform** that shapes the future of our profession. The reform encompasses four areas:

- Establishing Regional Chapters, specialized associations
- Strategic Positioning and Policy Engagement of EVA
- Building a Resilient Professional Association
- Constitutional Reform

The reform is aimed at making our association more inclusive, more responsive to its members, and more influential in national and international veterinary affairs. The quality of the reform depends on members' engagement in shaping it toward their aspirations. The reform aspires to engage veterinary students, women veterinarians, and senior veterinarians in ways most appropriate.

Colleagues, this conference is more than an academic gathering. It is a call to action to translate the proclamation into daily reality in vet clinics/hospitals, academics, farms, markets, abattoirs, laboratories, and border posts. It is also about embracing our role as veterinarians, scientists, policymakers, and advocates for a better future, one where Ethiopia's veterinary system is strong, humane, and internationally respected.

On behalf of the Ethiopian Veterinary Association, I thank the State Minister for the Livestock Fisheries Development sector, Legal Department, the Ethiopian Agricultural Authority, our partners, sponsors, and all of you for your dedication to this cause, and I look forward to the deliberations of the conference.

Once again, a very welcome to the 38th Annual Conference of EVA

Bojia E Duguma,
EVA President