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Press Release

Azerbaijani Health Minister Ogtay Shiraliyev, the deputy health minister and the chief sanitary doctor of the republic, Abbas Valibayov, Deputy Minister of Ecology and Natural Resources Firdovsi Aliyev, Deputy Agriculture Minister Aslan Aslanov, as well as the heads of the executive authorities of Salyan, Neftchala and Yardimli districts, held a regional meeting on the fight against avian flu today at the building of the executive authorities of Salyan District.

Health Minister Ogtay Shiraliyev made opening remarks at the meeting, saying that bird flu is one of the most dangerous diseases in the republic and the state agencies must join efforts to fight this disease. The minister noted that the World Health Organization (WHO) highly appreciated the work done by the ministry in this area last year. But this did not mean that the problem had been completely eliminated. The minister stressed that preventive measures should be strengthened and added that public awareness campaigns are not at a desired level. Mr. Shiraliyev also said that the local authorities cannot properly control the sale of hunted birds on the Salyan-Astara road.

The chief veterinarian doctor of the republic, Ismayil Hasanov, said that the migration of birds had been down by three times as compared to last year. The veterinarian said that people should strictly observe hygienic norms because the risks will be in place until 18-20 March this year. He also noted that there were few veterinarians in the regions.

Taking the floor afterwards, Deputy Health Minister Abbas Valibayov reiterated the WHO's appreciation of the Azerbaijani Health Ministry's fight against bird flu last year. But it does not mean that everything is at a high level, he added. The deputy minister said that Azerbaijan is a place with most frequent migrations of birds and therefore avian flu will be a hot topic in the country in the ten years to come. Mr. Valibayov said that monitoring was very weak, as hunted birds were being sold in 37 places on the Salyan road and 12 out of 14 restaurants on the roads were serving meals cooked from hunted birds on 27 January. The deputy minister said that veterinarians and the local authorities can appeal to the state commission to fight avian flu if they cannot control all these occurrences.