

**On the 11<sup>th</sup> December 1953** the first member country (Norway) signed its declaration of support to international control of FMD – through the joint work of the Commission - followed closely in December by the former Yugoslavia and Ireland. As FAO required at least six signatories to this Convention, the Commission was formally established in **June 1954** with the sixth member state. Back in those times, most state veterinarians – and farmers -knew FMD and the severe damage it causes – and as vaccines were in very short supply, the options for control were very limited, and consequences always severe.

The Commission, from the start, brought countries together to develop the first long term Strategy - based on national commitment to FMD control backed by international support - to harmonize actions and reduce the risk of epidemics entering from non-members and neighbouring regions in Asia and Africa. The strategy worked – FMD was rolled back, vaccination could cease in all but a few members; but keeping free remains a continuous battle, and work with international partners essential.

In 2013, we still have members that are not free of FMD –and many neighbouring countries that struggle with its management. As in 1953, FMD is a common disease – for those on our doorstep – but we are working with our members in new ways in new work program and under a new 4 year strategy (the "Three Pillars" ). On the 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of Yugoslavia joining the Commission, we have a workshop this week in **Skopje, FYROM, for the Western Balkan countries** that brings almost all of these countries together to prepare for a regional simulation exercise for FMD in 2014. We have a very full programme of activities to support our member states and contribute to the global effort, supported by the EC.

**Events in our 60<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Year** to which we hope all Member States will participate include:

Our **Training Programme**, starting with the Training Focal Points webinar in January 2014 to discuss the Training Programme and new e-learning options

The **Open Session of the EuFMD Standing Technical Committees**: Croatia, October 2014 -on how recent technical advances affect FMD risk management and policy.