

Ref.: C.L.2.2020

... The World Health Organization presents its compliments to Member States and has the honour to attach information on the current outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV).

This Circular Letter and the attached information is being dispatched through electronic mail to the official email addresses provided by Member States in response to circular letters C.L.38.2017 and C.L.25.2018 requesting Member States to provide an electronic address or electronic addresses where official correspondence can be sent.

This Circular Letter and the attached information has also been sent to representatives in the Permanent Missions to the United Nations Office and other International Organizations at Geneva.

WHO representatives and liaison officers have also received this Circular Letter and the information and are requested to follow-up with Member States as appropriate.

It is envisaged that the Secretariat will continue to share information and requests to Member States through this mechanism for rapid and timely engagement.

The World Health Organization takes this opportunity to renew to Member States the assurance of its highest consideration.

GENEVA, 6 February 2020

... ENCL.: (1)

Travel measures in relation to the public health emergency of international concern on the outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection

The WHO Secretariat would like to thank all Member States for their engagement and solidarity with the People's Republic of China in its efforts to contain the current outbreak of novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) infection.

The Secretariat would also like to remind Member States of joint obligations under the International Health Regulations (IHR) (2005) on collaboration and on implementing additional health measures.

According to Article 2 of IHR (2005), the purpose and scope of the Regulations are to prevent, protect against, control and provide a public health response to the international spread of disease in ways that are commensurate with and restricted to public health risks, and, in particular, in ways that avoid unnecessary interference with international traffic and trade.

On 30 January 2020, the WHO Director-General declared the outbreak of 2019-nCoV infection a public health emergency of international concern, and WHO issued temporary recommendations for the People's Republic of China and for other countries.^[1] Two of the temporary recommendations addressed to all countries are as follows:

- “The Committee does not recommend any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available.
- Countries must inform WHO about travel measures taken, as required by IHR (2005).”

Evidence on travel measures that significantly interfere with international traffic for more than 24 hours shows that such measures may have a public health rationale at the beginning of the containment phase of an outbreak, as they may allow affected countries to implement sustained response measures, and non-affected countries to gain time to initiate and implement effective preparedness measures. Such restrictions, however, need to be short in duration, proportionate to the public health risks, and be reconsidered regularly as the situation evolves.

Under Article 43 of IHR (2005), States Parties implementing additional health measures that significantly interfere with international traffic (refusal of entry or departure of international travelers, baggage, cargo, containers, conveyances, goods, and the like, or their delay, for more than 24 hours) are required to send to WHO the public health rationale and relevant scientific information within 48 hours of their implementation. WHO will review the justification and may request countries to reconsider their measures. WHO is required to share with other States Parties to the IHR the information about measures and the justification received. The process implemented by the Secretariat to follow up on the implementation of such measures is attached (see Annex).

WHO would like to encourage Member States to continue to communicate with WHO IHR Contact Points across the six WHO regions.

^[1] [https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-\(2005\)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-\(2019-ncov\)](https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/30-01-2020-statement-on-the-second-meeting-of-the-international-health-regulations-(2005)-emergency-committee-regarding-the-outbreak-of-novel-coronavirus-(2019-ncov))

Annex

Process to follow up on the implementation of the temporary recommendations and additional health measures under the IHR (2005)

The Secretariat is compiling and recording the information and public health rationale provided officially to WHO through the regional IHR Contact Points. As at 15:00 on 5 February 2020, WHO had received official reports on additional health measures from 22 States Parties. The WHO Secretariat is also screening for media signals on travel restrictions. When signals on travel restrictions are identified on official websites of national authorities, the Secretariat will, as necessary, facilitate the provision of the public health rationale by States Parties to WHO. This will be done through the regional WHO IHR Contact Points, who will communicate with the National IHR Focal Points of IHR States Parties. Contact details of the WHO IHR Contact Points in the regions and the National IHR Focal Points are available on the secure platform of the WHO Event Information Site.

Where appropriate, the Secretariat may request reconsideration of the measures, in compliance with Article 43. The Secretariat will share with other States Parties information received on the measures and their public health rationale. It will do this through a weekly announcement on the protected platform for National IHR Focal Points on the WHO Event Information Site.

The Secretariat will report to the World Health Assembly on these measures through the annual report on implementation of the International Health Regulations (2005).

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