



5 December 2018, Cairo, Egypt – Seven countries from the Eastern Mediterranean Region are participating in a simulation exercise for a global pandemic which started on 4 December. The exercise is coordinated by the World Health Organization’s Global Emergency Operations Centre (EOC) and the EOC Network, a global network of health emergency operations centres.

Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon, Oman, Saudi Arabia, Tunisia and United Arab Emirates are among more than 40 countries worldwide participating in the three-day simulation, which is the first global pandemic response training exercise, and the third in a series of simulations this year, following regional exercises in Jordan and Senegal. The Regional Emergency Operations Centre in Cairo, Egypt, is to be participating in the event.

“This exercise offers a hands-on process to determine the capacity of WHO and countries to respond to a potential outbreak of influenza with pandemic potential, allowing us to then identify gaps that need to be addressed,” said Dr Michel Thieren, Regional Emergency Director, WHO Health Emergency Programme.

The simulation scenario revolves around an imaginary outbreak of influenza with pandemic potential on the fictional island nation of Mizzou, located off the coast of North America, and will offer participants a way to test their plans and capabilities in a realistic environment and to gain the in-depth experience that can best be achieved through practice.

Evaluators drawn from Africa, Asia, Europe and North America are watching how the participating EOCs perform in real time, measuring performance against what is expected from existing procedures. This experience will help identify gaps and opportunities, and will ultimately help in the assessment and improvement of Member States’ readiness to respond jointly and effectively to a global public health emergency. The exercise is only a part of the many ways WHO supports countries to be ready for global health emergencies.

The exercise occurs on the centenary of the 1918 influenza pandemic, which is estimated to

have infected one third of the global population and resulted in the deaths of millions of people. The most recent global influenza pandemic occurred about a decade ago. These events occur periodically and it is only a matter of a time before another global pandemic occurs. Member States have been working diligently with WHO to be prepared for the next event.

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