

Cairo, Egypt, 29 January 2020 – The World Health Organization (WHO) today confirmed the first cases of 2019-nCoV in the Eastern Mediterranean Region in the United Arab Emirates. This follows earlier confirmation by the Ministry of Health and Prevention of the United Arab Emirates on 29 January. Four members of the same family from Wuhan City in China arrived in the United Arab Emirates beginning/mid-January 2020, and were hospitalized on 25 and 27 January after testing positive for coronavirus. Two of the patients are asymptomatic.

“The Regional Office continues to monitor disease trends and work with Member States to ensure the highest degrees of readiness to detect and respond to potential cases,” affirmed WHO’s Regional Director, Dr Ahmed Al Mandhari. This is vital to controlling transmission, and providing effective treatment to those who become ill. We urge individuals to stay calm and take the necessary precautions to keep themselves and their loved ones safe.”

WHO has been fully engaged with the nCoV outbreak since China reported the first cases in late December. It continues to guide countries on preparedness, surveillance, verification and response, strengthen laboratory capacities, and mobilize essential supplies and medicines. WHO also provides advice to the public on prevention.

Due to the global nature of travel, it is expected that further exported cases of 2019-nCoV may appear in other countries, and the possibility of other cases arriving in the Eastern Mediterranean Region is likely. WHO reminds all countries to apply additional efforts to strengthen capacities for the early detection, investigation and rapid response to public health events. Country obligations for these measures are outlined under the International Health Regulations (2005). So far, WHO recommends no restrictions on travel and trade.

WHO recommends that to protect against the novel virus and reduce general risk of its transmission, individuals should avoid close contact with people suffering from acute respiratory infections; wash hands frequently, especially after direct contact with ill people or their environment; and avoid unprotected contact with farm or wild animals. WHO does not recommend any specific additional health measures for travellers or for the conduct of trade.

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