



WAHO Statement on the Outbreak of Novel Coronavirus in China

Bobo-Dioulasso, 27 January 2020 – This statement on the recent outbreak of Coronavirus infection in China is issued by the West African Health Organization (WAHO), the Institution of ECOWAS for health, to inform the general public of ongoing measures to protect the region and what people should do to protect themselves.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that can cause diseases ranging from the common cold to severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS). The first case was reported in Wuhan Province of China in December 2019 and confirmed to be Coronavirus on 7 January 2020. However as at 27 January 2020, about 3000 cases have been confirmed across the world, with 2744 cases and the only deaths (80) so far in China alone.

The World Health Organization (WHO) assesses the risk of this outbreak to be **VERY HIGH** in China, and **MODERATE** globally including in West Africa. It is therefore critical that all countries collaborate with each other to take precautionary measures since cases may appear in any country due to international travel. WAHO fully supports WHO's recommendations to countries regarding active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, and contact tracing to prevent further spread of this outbreak.

Coordination with ECOWAS Member States?

WAHO is coordinating with Member States to share real-time information on the outbreak, enhance communication between countries and strengthen countries' surveillance capacity, including early detection of suspected cases through thermal camera surveillance at international borders. One such suspected case arriving Abidjan airport recently was immediately detected and isolated and tests are now being performed to confirm whether this is a case of coronavirus or not. WAHO has also implemented a regional laboratory network for access to rapid biological diagnostic facilities by Member States, and has a standby Regional Rapid Response Team to support countries if required.

How should individuals protect themselves?

WAHO strongly advises individuals to take the following measures to protect themselves and their loved ones:

- Frequently wash your hands with soap and water or clean them using alcohol-based sanitisers;
- When coughing or sneezing, cover your mouth and nose with tissue or hand, and throw away the tissue immediately and wash your hands thoroughly;
- Avoid close contact with anyone who has fever and cough;
- If you have fever, cough or difficulty breathing, seek medical care immediately and inform your health care provider of all your recent travel history;
- In any areas with high suspicion of Coronavirus, avoid direct unprotected contact with live animals and surfaces in contact with animals when visiting markets;
- At all times, avoid eating raw or undercooked meat. Raw meat, milk or animal organs should be handled with care, to avoid cross-contamination with uncooked foods.

WAHO will continue to monitor and provide regular updates on this rapidly changing situation. - **END** -

About the West African Health Organization (WAHO): WAHO is the specialized institution of the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) responsible for health issues. Its mission is to attain the highest possible standard and protection of health of the peoples in the sub-region through the harmonization of the policies of the Member States, pooling of resources, and cooperation with one another and with others for a collective and strategic fight against the health problems of the sub-region.

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