

WHAT IS A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN?

Relevant for: Developmental Issues | Topic: Health & Sanitation and related issues

A mother and her child wear a mask to prevent contacting a new coronavirus in Seoul, South Korea, January 26, 2020. | Photo Credit: [REUTERS](#)

The World Health Organisation (WHO) on Thursday declared the [novel coronavirus](#) outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

The WHO declares a [Public Health Emergency](#) of International Concern when there is "an extraordinary event which is determined... to constitute a public health risk to other states through the international spread of disease."

The last time WHO declared a global health emergency was in 2019 for the Ebola outbreak in eastern Congo that killed more than 2,000 people. The agency also declared global emergencies for the 2016 Zika virus, the 2009 H1N1 swine flu, and the 2014 polio and Ebola outbreaks.

The WHO Committee agreed that the [novel coronavirus](#) outbreak now meets the criteria for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

WHO has now noted that it expected that further international exportation of cases may appear in any country.

All countries should be prepared for containment, including active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, contact tracing and prevention of onward spread of 2019-nCoV infection, and to share full data with WHO.

Countries are reminded that they are legally required to share information with WHO under the IHR.

Any detection of 2019-nCoV in an animal (including information about the species, diagnostic tests, and relevant epidemiological information) should be reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) as an emerging disease.

Countries should place particular emphasis on reducing human infection, prevention of secondary transmission and international spread, and contributing to the international response through multi-sectoral communication and collaboration and active participation in increasing knowledge on the virus and the disease, as well as advancing research.

The WHO Committee does not recommend any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available.

Countries must inform WHO about any travel measures taken. Countries are cautioned against actions that promote stigma or discrimination, in line with the principles of Article 3 of the IHR.

The WHO Committee has asked the Director-General to provide further advice on these matters and, if necessary, to make new case-by-case recommendations, in view of this rapidly evolving situation.

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In one week, the number of people found infected by the novel coronavirus grew from 332 people in 13 Chinese provinces and four nations to 4,474 cases in 30 provinces and 18 countries

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