

WHO declares global emergency for outbreak of new coronavirus



Geneva, January 30 (RHC)-- The World Health Organization (WHO) Thursday declared an international emergency in the face of the rapid increase in patients affected by the new 2019-nCoV coronavirus, and more than 8,000 confirmed cases in 18 countries.

Our greatest concern is the potential for the virus to spread to countries with weaker health systems,” stated WHO’s Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus. Although 99 percent of cases have been diagnosed within China, Adhanom reiterated that the “declaration is not a vote of no confidence in China.”

A health global emergency triggers recommendations to all countries aimed at preventing or reducing the cross-border spread of disease, while avoiding unnecessary interference with trade and travel. It covers temporary recommendations for national health authorities worldwide, which include stepping up their monitoring, preparedness and containment measures. Previous emergencies have included Ebola, Zika and H1N1.

Although the WHO has no legal authority to sanction countries, it could ask governments to provide scientific justification for any travel or trade restrictions that they impose in the event of an international emergency.

As of Thursday, there have been 8,137 confirmed cases of Wuhan coronavirus in China, including 171 deaths.

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