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Yaoundé, 31 JAN 2020

PRESS DECLARATION

OUTBREAK CAUSED BY THE NEW CORONAVIRUS IN CHINA

- Your Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen ;
- The Representatives of WHO, CDC and other partner Administrations;
- The professionals of the media ;

As you are aware, a new Coronavirus named *2019-nCoV* which has emerged in China is circulating since 31 December 2019. This virus can quickly spread internationally due to major population movements between countries. The virus reservoir is found in animals (bats, snakes, camels,...). It is transmitted from animals to humans and human-to-human transmission is proven. The disease's symptoms are characterized by a cough-like respiratory tract condition, sore throat, runny nose and/or breathing difficulties sometimes with fever likely to cause death.

The epidemiological situation reports 9776 confirmed cases and 213 deaths at 31 January 2020, 10:00 a.m. Currently, 23 countries worldwide have reported cases; yet no case has been recorded in Africa. Yesterday evening (30 January), WHO declared the Coronavirus outbreak which is rife in China a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC). Hence, WHO and Africa CDC (Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention) recommend countries to be vigilant and reinforce the national preparedness and response system towards a potential importation of the virus.

To this end, government actions are undertaken in line with the International Health Regulations:

At the level of coordination :

- The Centre for Public Health Emergency Operations was placed on a state of alert ;
- Multisector collaboration between the Ministries of Public Health, Transports, External Relations, Husbandry, Fisheries and Animal Industries

is effective to reinforce epidemiological surveillance of travellers and animals at various entry points in airports and seaports. As such, temperature devices, health declaration forms, awareness posters are being used.

This equally involves ensuring the health security of the Cameroonian community living in China mostly composed of students. To this end, the Embassy of Cameroon in China is closely monitoring the situation.

With regard to diagnosis and management, the Centre Pasteur of Cameroon has the technical capacities to conduct the biological diagnosis of the disease. Isolation rooms have been identified in airports and health facilities likely to receive cases. Rapid investigation and intervention teams are available in the 10 regions.

To prevent the risks of transmission, the population is advised to follow the basic hygiene rules below:

- Clean hands with soap and water or an alcohol-based solution
- Cover nose and mouth when coughing and sneezing with tissue or flexed elbow
- Avoid close contact with anyone with cold or flu-like symptoms, and farm animals.
- Thoroughly cook meat and eggs before eating them.

Travellers are advised to postpone all unnecessary trips to China or affected countries. Moreover, any person who has travelled out of Cameroon or has been in contact with a sick traveller, and presenting the above-mentioned symptoms within 14 days before the onset of the disease should immediately dial 1510 for treatment. Health personnel should equally enhance prevention measures and immediately declare any suspect case based on current guidelines.

For additional information, call toll-free number 1510. For now, this line remains open to the public from 8:00 a.m. to 4 p.m., but may start operating 24/24 based on how the situation evolves.



Dr. Manaonda Malachie