UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: New Coronavirus China - WHO

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Shotlist

2. Wide shot, press briefing room
3. SOUNDbite (EN) Tarik Jašarević (WHO): “On January 9th, Chinese authorities made a preliminary determination of a new coronavirus identified in a hospitalized person with pneumonia in Wuhan. Two days later, Chinese authorities issued additional information updating case numbers to 41 from initially 59, and reporting one death. Chinese authorities also shared the complete genomic sequence with WHO and with the public”.
4. Medium shot: podium
5. SOUNDbite (EN) Maria D Van Kerkhove (Head, Emerging Diseases and Zoonoses Unit, WHO): “Epidemiologic investigations are under way and we are waiting for the results of these but yes, it is certainly possible that there is limited human-to-human transmission. There are many similarities to SARS and MERS. This is a coronavirus and this helps us. The experience that we have with SARS and with MERS, the experience of our member states who have experience with these pathogens have prepared us for this. This is not unexpected. This is something that the global community is preparing for, and all of the systems are in place to activate our plans and to utilize the materials that we developed for SARS, for MERS, and adapt them to our current situation.”
6. Wide shot, press briefing room
7. SOUNDbite (EN) Maria D Van Kerkhove (Head, Emerging Diseases and Zoonoses Unit, WHO): “There are some antivirals that are in consideration, and these are antivirals that are used for other diseases that could be repurposed for a novel coronavirus infection. There are
immunotherapies that are under consideration- monoclonals or polyclonals- but again there is a lot of work that is ongoing for MERS coronavirus that can be applicable here.”

8. Medium shot: podium
9. Medium shot: journalists
10. Medium shot: journalists
11. Close-up: journalist
12. Close-up: journalist
The World Health Organization (WHO) today confirmed the presence of new coronavirus in China, a respiratory illness with 41 confirmed cases and one death to date, as investigations continue and health agencies prepare for a possible outbreak.

Coronaviruses are a large family of viruses that cause illness ranging from the common cold to more severe diseases such as Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) and Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS).

WHO spokesperson Tarik Jašarević told journalists that after a "new coronavirus" (technically known as "novel coronavirus", or “nCoV”, which is a new strain that has not been previously identified in humans) was detected in a hospitalized person with pneumonia in Wuhan, "Chinese authorities updated confirmed cases to 41," he said. Of the 41 confirmed cases, seven have been discharged, six are said to be severe cases, and one person has died.

"Chinese authorities shared the complete genomic sequence with WHO and with the public", Jašarević said, that this would be of great importance for other countries to use in developing specific diagnostic kits.

According to the preliminary epidemiological investigation, most cases involved people who either worked at or were handlers and frequent visitors to a single seafood market in the central city of Wuhan, but one confirmed case involved a woman travelling from Wuhan to Thailand.

"Epidemiologic investigations are under way and we are waiting for the results of these but yes, it is certainly possible that there is limited human to human transmission," said Dr. Maria D Van Kerkhove, WHO’s Head of the Emerging Diseases and Zoonoses Unit. There is currently no travel ban to Wuhan, and more information will be released as investigations continue.

Dr. Van Kerkhove observed that “the experience of our member states have had with these pathogens”, referring to previous outbreaks of SARS and MERS, “have prepared us for this.” She stressed that “a lot of work that is ongoing for MERS coronavirus that can be applicable here” and can be adapted to deal with this new coronavirus.

The clinical signs and symptoms reported are mainly fever, with a few cases having difficulty in breathing, and chest radiographs showing invasive pneumonic infiltrates in both lungs. National authorities report that patients have been isolated and are receiving treatment in Wuhan medical institutions.

Dr. Van Kerkhove stressed that WHO is closely monitoring the situation and is in regular contact with national authorities in China to provide support required.

“This is something the global community is preparing for, and all of the systems are in place to activate our plans and to utilize the materials that we developed for SARS, for MERS, and adapt them to our current situation,” she told media at the United Nations in Geneva. Technical guidance on the novel coronavirus has been developed and will continue to be updated as additional information is available, she added.