UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing: Coronavirus Update WHO

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Shotlist

2. Wide shot, press room, journalists, podium.
3. **SOUNDBITE: Fadela Chaib, Spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):** “As of 6am Geneva time this morning, there were 42,708 confirmed cases reported in China and tragically we now have surpassed 1,000 deaths, to be precise, it’s 1,017 people in China who have lost their lives to this outbreak. Outside China, we have 393 cases in 24 countries with one death; the one death is in the Philippines.”
5. Medium shot, journalists working on laptops.
6. **SOUNDBITE: Fadela Chaib, Spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):** “It’s a combination, you are seeing more cases because we are detecting more cases and also because it’s a backlog of cases that are now being tested in labs.”
7. Close-up, journalist typing on laptop.
8. **SOUNDBITE: Fadela Chaib, Spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):** “Ninety-nine per cent of cases are in China; this remains very much an emergency for that country, but it’s also a high risk for the region, Asia region and for the world.”
9. Medium shot, journalists.
10. **SOUNDBITE: Fadela Chaib, Spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):** “We are still in the very early stage of understanding this virus; how it is transmitted, the source of the virus, the incubation period, the clinical feature, the severity of it, etc.”

11. Medium shot, journalist writing on notepaper.

12. **SOUNDBITE: Fadela Chaib, Spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):** “They are not only talking about vaccines or therapeutics or diagnostic tests, they will also talk about the human-animal interface of this virus, they will also talk about the clinical features of the patients they have seen, they will share information about all of this.”


14. **SOUNDBITE: Fadela Chaib, Spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):** “Three hundred high-level scientists is a lot, in my opinion and they are also working in networks in networks and organisations. The information is shared, we are sharing the genome sequencing of the virus with hundreds of laboratories worldwide, so there is a real international mobilisation against this novel coronavirus.”

15. Medium shot, journalist typing on laptop, semi-profile.

16. **SOUNDBITE: Fadela Chaib, Spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):** “We have a lot of unknowns with this virus. We are saying it’s from one to 14 days. But we are welcoming all sorts of studies and scientific papers that provides more and more knowledge to the scientific community to better understand this outbreak and the virus itself.”

17. Medium shot, journalists, semi-profile.

18. Close-up, journalist wearing headphones, UN logo and speaker partly obscured.
Deaths from the coronavirus epidemic have surpassed 1,000, the World Health Organization (WHO) confirmed on Tuesday, as hundreds of health experts embarked on a key meeting at its headquarters in Geneva to help decide next steps.

“As of 6am Geneva time this morning, there were 42,708 confirmed cases reported in China and tragically we now have surpassed 1,000 deaths,” said Fadela Chaib, WHO spokesperson.

“To be precise, it’s 1,017 people in China who have lost their lives to this outbreak. Outside China, we have 393 cases in 24 countries with one death; the one death is in the Philippines.”

As infections tick up since novel coronavirus (2019-nCoV) was declared in central China on 31 December, Ms. Chaib noted that this was likely owing to a “combination” of improved screening and detection measures.

“It’s a combination; you are seeing more cases because we are detecting more cases and also because it’s a backlog of cases that are now being tested in labs,” she explained.

The development comes as some 300 scientists, public health agencies, ministries of health and research funders convened for an expert two-day meeting at WHO to share the latest information about the virus and decide how best to confront it.

Currently, there is no vaccine to protect against it and no proven therapeutics to infections, WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told those gathered at WHO headquarters for the Research and Innovation Forum on novel coronavirus 2019.

Appealing to participants for their scientific insight, Tedros also called for answers to many unknowns relating to the epidemic.

These include the virus’s “reservoirs”, Tedros said, as well as its transmission dynamics and period of infectiosity, which samples to use for diagnosis and monitoring, along with discussions around how to manage severe cases of infection and any ethical issues that may surface relating to research requirements.

“This is not a meeting about politics or money. This is a meeting about science,” he insisted.

“There is still so much we don’t know….We need your collective knowledge, insight and experience to answer the questions we don’t have answers to, and to identify the questions we may not even realize we need to ask.”

One of the hoped-for outcomes of the meeting is an agreed roadmap for research around which researchers and donors will align.
A key imperative was the sharing of samples and sequences of the coronavirus, Tedros said, before insisting that “to defeat this outbreak, we need open and equitable sharing, according to the principles of fairness and equity”.

Following the West African Ebola outbreak, the UN health agency devised a strategy for developing drugs and vaccines before future epidemics, and for accelerating research and development activities during outbreaks.

In line with this protocol, an “R&D Blueprint” team at WHO began work in early January this year, to coordinate and facilitate information-sharing on research elements of the response, Tedros explained. Echoing the WHO Director-General’s comments, Ms. Chaib told a news conference that much was still unknown about the virus, which remains principally a threat in China.

“We are still in the very early stage of understanding this virus,” she said. “How it is transmitted, the source of the virus, the incubation period, the clinical feature, the severity of it, etc…99 per cent of cases are in China; this remains very much an emergency for that country, but it’s also a high risk for the region, Asia region and for the world.”

Discussing the work of the coronavirus forum at the WHO, Ms. Chaib reiterated the hope that scientists would share information across many cross-cutting areas.

“They are not only talking about vaccines or therapeutics or diagnostic tests, they will also talk about the human-animal interface of this virus,” she said. “They will also talk about the clinical features of the patients they have seen, they will share information about all of this.”

She added: “Three hundred high-level scientists is a lot, in my opinion, and they are also working in networks in networks and organisations. The information is shared, we are sharing the genome sequencing of the virus with hundreds of laboratories worldwide, so there is a real international mobilisation against this novel coronavirus.”

In response to a question that the incubation period of the coronavirus might turn out to be longer than two weeks - the currently accepted timeline - the WHO spokesperson underscored that “we have a lot of unknowns with this virus. We are saying it’s from one to 14 days. But we are welcoming all sorts of studies and scientific papers that provides more and more knowledge to the scientific community to better understand this outbreak and the virus itself.”