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MEDIA RELEASE

The Risk of 2019-nCoV Remains Low for the Caribbean but CARPHA Encourages Vigilance at Ports of Entry

CARPHA is urging Member States to continue to be vigilant and to step up surveillance at their ports of entry. This, following an announcement by the World Health Organization (WHO) on 30th January, 2020, declaring the 2019-nCoV outbreak in Wuhan, China, as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

A PHEIC is defined in the International Health Regulations (2005) as “an extraordinary event which is determined, as provided in these Regulations to constitute a public health risk to other States through the international spread of disease; and to potentially require a coordinated international response”. This definition implies a situation that: is serious, unusual or unexpected; carries implications for public health beyond the affected State’s national border; and may require immediate international action.

Executive Director, CARPHA, Dr. Joy St. John maintains that the risk of the novel 2019-Corona virus remains low for the Caribbean region. She added that the risk is deemed low because there are no direct flights from China to the Caribbean and travellers will receive multiple screenings before arrival to Member States. Dr. St. John explained that health agencies and Caribbean officials at a meeting of the Regional Coordinating Mechanism for Health Security (RCMHS) on 29 January agreed with this risk assessment, having confirmed that there are no reported cases of the 2019-nCoV in the Region.

The International Health Regulations’ Emergency Committee is not recommending trade or travel restrictions at this time. CARPHA urges regional national authorities to work with airlines, passenger ships and other transport and tourism industries to ensure that Caribbean residents and visitors alike remain free of 2019-nCoV.

CARPHA will continue to monitor these developments and provide Member States with guidance to support national response efforts, while strengthening Regional Health Security in collaboration with regional partners.

More information on the ongoing outbreak can be found on CARPHA’s website at www.carpha.org

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