

Communiqué

October 25, 2005
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Ottawa 2005: Global Pandemic Influenza Readiness An International Meeting of Health Ministers

1. Participating Ministers of Health and delegates¹ representative of developed and developing countries, from all parts of the world, including those affected by the current avian influenza, agreed today in Ottawa on key policy priorities and actions that must guide international efforts to prevent, prepare for, and respond to an influenza pandemic.
2. They stressed that, while at this time, there is no pandemic influenza anywhere in the world, vigilance and surveillance need to remain high.
3. They also stressed the importance of distinguishing between seasonal human influenza outbreaks and the current avian (bird) influenza outbreak of H5N1 in various parts of the world. H5N1 causes serious illness and death in migratory birds and poultry. In order to become a pandemic flu strain able to infect humans, the H5N1 virus would have to change to allow it to transmit easily from person to person. It is essential that countries continue to monitor the H5N1 virus and increase efforts to prepare for an influenza pandemic.
4. Ministers agreed that a multi-sectoral approach, beginning with the animal health and human health sectors, must underlie global efforts towards coordinated pandemic planning, particularly in light of the current Avian influenza strain that is now appearing in parts of Asia and Europe. Since the H5N1 strain of avian influenza has not yet demonstrated the ability to spread easily between humans, the immediate global public health issue is to work collaboratively with the animal health sector to prevent and contain the spread of the H5N1 virus among animals, and from animals to humans. They stressed the importance of collaboration and support between countries in developing national and regional plans for avian influenza control and pandemic influenza preparedness within the framework of a coherent international risk management approach.
5. In addition to animal-human health collaboration, Ministers identified three other key policy areas for immediate attention to ensure that the prevention, planning and response to a potential pandemic influenza are carried out in a fully collaborative manner among all countries and multilateral institutions:
 - (a) strengthening the capacity for surveillance, early detection and diagnosis of, timely communication about, and rapid response to a range of infectious diseases;
 - (b) developing a global approach to vaccine and antiviral policy for research, development, increased production capacity, access and distribution; and
 - (c) coordinating risk communications.
6. Ministers endorsed two principles for effective global cooperation: full transparency between countries and institutions involved in responding to the risk of pandemic influenza; and full support to the leading role of multilateral institutions.
7. Ministers welcomed the international work of the World Health Organization (WHO), Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE), the World Bank, Asian Development Bank, the European Commission, ASEAN, and the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) whose roles in preventing and planning for a pandemic influenza are central to this international effort.
8. Ministers also welcomed the appointment by the United Nations Secretary General of a Senior UN System Coordinator for Avian and Human Influenza.

9. Ministers noted that the strategic documents on pandemic influenza preparedness and control of avian influenza prepared by the FAO, OIE and WHO, have laid the groundwork for global coordination.

10. To maximize our global capacity to protect human health, early identification and understanding of risk of the spread of viruses between animals and from animals to humans is essential. To this end, Ministers called for:

- (a) increasing research on avian influenza viruses, including their ability to spread from animals to humans;
- (b) increasing the capacity for surveillance and for the exchange of information between the agriculture and health sectors at the local, national and international levels;
- (c) expanding and integrating the network of relevant WHO collaborating centres and FAO-OIE reference laboratories, for the rapid identification of virus strains;
- (d) developing, under the OIE and with the support of the FAO and WHO, internationally-agreed, practical and science-based bio-security guidelines for the poultry sector and guidelines on the design and implementation of veterinary policy which would provide the basis for advice to farming communities to ensure appropriate animal and public health standards for the raising, handling and transporting of potentially flu-bearing animals.

11. Ministers recognized that the capacity of countries and international institutions to conduct disease surveillance and early detection, diagnosis, reporting and rapid response are keys to preventing and containing the spread of infectious diseases and urged that worldwide capacity be strengthened by:

- (a) supporting national laboratory capacity building, epidemiological investigation, and surveillance activities, response capacities, including through regional collaboration and capacity building;
- (b) enhancing and harmonizing routine surveillance systems worldwide;
- (c) relevant sharing of emergency management plans and experience;
- (d) enhancing international co-ordination and establishing protocols for sharing information transparently and efficiently, in support of the objectives of the revised International Health Regulations (2005), and recognizing OIE obligations;
- (e) developing an immediate co-ordinated program of public health and veterinary assistance and support for affected countries;
- (f) the development and implementation by countries of national plans for avian influenza control and pandemic influenza preparedness which recognize the broader economic and social impacts. The FAO, OIE, WHO and the World Bank could assist as appropriate;
- (g) responding rapidly to requests for experts to assist the Director General of the WHO on the pandemic influenza risks.

12. Ministers agreed that as part of preparedness planning, the development, production, access and distribution of vaccines and antiviral drugs are common challenges that have scientific, technical, economic and policy dimensions. They agreed to:

- (a) include vaccines and antivirals as key components in pandemic influenza preparedness and response plans both at the national and international levels;
- (b) work collaboratively between countries to advance vaccine and antiviral research and development;

(c) develop, as quickly as possible, mechanisms to increase production capacity, and enhance pharmaceutical delivery so that there can be equitable access to vaccines and antivirals worldwide;

(d) call for a meeting of drug-regulating authorities to develop a framework to address common regulatory challenges to expedite vaccine registration and availability.

13. Ministers recognized that coordinating risk communication activities among countries and multilateral institutions is essential to inform the public, avoid panic, and prevent economic and social disruption. Ministers recognized the importance of WHO's *Outbreak Communication Guidelines* and urged that:

(a) risk communication be included as part of national pandemic preparedness planning;

(b) information-sharing protocols among countries and multilateral organizations be established to ensure effective and meaningful communications before and during a pandemic;

(c) research be undertaken on effective risk communication approaches;

(d) effective partnerships be developed with media and other key stakeholders for the exchange and dissemination of accurate and timely information that encourage appropriate public health and animal husbandry practices by individuals and communities to protect against infection.

14. Ministers also recognized that multi-sectoral efforts must include all players, including civil society, academia, media, consumers and the private sector, at the local, national, regional and international levels, for effective global coordination.

15. Ministers emphasized that capacity building and planning in all countries will be facilitated by appropriate national and international investments and resource sharing through both bilateral and multilateral efforts. They also recognized that international assistance and technical support efforts should be coordinated, and welcomed the upcoming FAO/OIE/WHO/World Bank meeting on Avian and Pandemic Influenza (Geneva, November 7-9 2005), where these issues will be discussed.

16. Ministers noted that this meeting complements a number of other important global health initiatives, including the US-created International Partnership on Avian and Pandemic Influenza, the adoption in May 2005 of the revised WHO International Health Regulations (entry into force 2007), and the Global Health Security Initiative (Rome, November 17-18, 2005), as well as a WHO consultation meeting on risk communication (Geneva, December 6-8, 2005).

17. Ministers also recognized the importance of Regional initiatives such as the upcoming Summit of the Americas in Argentina (November 3-5, 2005), the APEC Economic Leaders Meeting in Korea (November 18-19, 2005), and the WHO/EU Workshop on Pandemic Influenza (Copenhagen, October 24-26, 2005). They encouraged other similar initiatives to be undertaken as important opportunities to raise global awareness and political commitment at the highest levels to improve global pandemic preparedness.

18. In conclusion, Ministers viewed the Ottawa meeting as an important step towards securing long-term, sustained political and institutional engagement to address global pandemic influenza preparedness.

Attachment

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An International Meeting of Health Ministers

Ministers and Heads of Delegations.

Dr. Ginés González Garcia, Minister of Health and Environment, Argentina

Hon. Tony Abbott, Minister of Health and Ageing, Australia

Dr. Saraiva Felipe, Minister of Health, Brazil

His Excellency Huot Eng, Secretary of State for Health, Cambodia

Hon. Ujjal Dosanjh, Minister of Health, Canada

Hon. Carolyn Bennett, Minister of State (Public Health), Canada

Qiang Gao, Minister of Health, China

Dr. Amr Mohamed Kandeel, Director General, General Administration for Infectious Diseases, Egypt

His Excellency Daniel Jouanneau, Ambassador to Canada, France

Franz-Josef Bindert, Deputy Director General, Group Infection and Health Care Unit, Ministry of Health and Social Security, Germany

Niraj Srivastava, Deputy High Commissioner, High Commission of India

Dr. Siti Fadilah Supari, Minister of Health, Indonesia

Hon. Cesare Corsi, State Undersecretary, Italy

Hon. John Junor, Minister of Health, Jamaica

Dr. Motoyuki Fujii, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Labour and Welfare, Japan

Erbolat Dossaev, Minister of Health, Kazakhstan

Chiang-Jin Moon, Deputy Minister for Health and Welfare, Korea

Dr. Nor Shahidah Khairullah, Director, National Institute for Natural Products, Vaccines and Biologicals and Director, Infectious Diseases Research, Ministry of Health, Malaysia

Julio Frenk, Minister of Health, Mexico

Roel Bekker, Secretary General, Ministry of Health, The Netherlands

Chief (Mrs.) Helen Udoakha Esuene, Minister of State for Health, Nigeria

Dr. Yuri M. Fedorov, Deputy Director, Department of Sanitary Protection of the Territory of the Russian Federation, Federal Service for Surveillance on Consumer Rights Protection and Human Well-being, Russian Federation

Dr. Balaji Sadasivan, Senior Minister of State for Health, Singapore

Nobayeni C. Dladla, Health Attaché, Embassy of South Africa, Washington

Johan Carlson, Deputy Chief Medical Officer, National Board of Health and Welfare, Sweden

Gaudenz Silberschmidt, Vice Director/Head of International Affairs, Swiss Federal Office of Public Health, Switzerland

Praphasri Jongsuksuntigul, Director, Office of Influenza Program, Department of Disease Control, Ministry of Public Health, Thailand

His Excellency Aydemir Erman, Turkey Ambassador to Canada, Turkey

Rosie Winterton, Minister of State for Health Services, UK

Michael Okerlund Leavitt, Secretary of Health and Human Services, USA

Tran Hien Nguyen, Director, National Institute of Hygiene Epidemiology, Vietnam

Dr. Wilfrido V. Villacorta, ASEAN Deputy Secretary General, ASEAN

His Excellency Eric John Hayes, Ambassador, Delegation of the European Commission to Canada

Dr. Jacques Diouf, Director General, FAO

Dr. Alejandro Thiermann, President, Terrestrial Animal Health Code Commission, OIE

Dr. David Nabarro, UN System Senior Coordinator for Avian and Human Influenza, Office of the Secretary-General

Dr. Jong-wook Lee, Director General, WHO

Jean-Louis Sarbib, Senior Vice President, Human Development, World Bank

1 Ministers refers to both Ministers and Heads of Delegation

