



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH SEYCHELLES

PRESS RELEASE

WEDNESDAY 11TH MARCH 2020

Public Health Authority issues new Travel and Health advisory update about the COVID-19

Overview and situation analysis

As of 10th March 2020, the number of confirmed cases of COVID-19 has exceeded 113,000 in 104 different countries, twice the number of countries than one week ago. About 60% of confirmed cases have already recovered. Total number of death globally stands at 4012, most being in China, followed by Italy, Iran and South Korea. The epidemic has been slowing down in China. Most European countries have registered confirmed cases with the rate of infection rising in some. Community transmission within China, South Korea, Italy and Iran remain significant. With the open borders that EU countries have, transmission from one country to the next has occurred, and containment challenging. The escalation of the outbreak globally has resulted in many countries putting measures that limit travel. Flights booking into Seychelles have already reduced significantly and this will certainly impact adversely on the tourism industry, even if Seychelles does not put additional countries to restrict travel from.

A detailed risk versus benefit analysis indicates that Seychelles as a small island state that depends on tourism and imports from across the globe, stands to lose much more than benefit with additional travel restrictions on countries. Such additional restrictions may force most airlines to withdraw their flights into Seychelles and this will adversely affect the movement of not only people but also essential goods such as food, medicines and vaccine among others.

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has been emphasizing on the need for countries to prepare to respond to cases and take mitigating measures. Seychelles has a response plan in place and the delay of COVID's-19 entry into Seychelles has allowed us to put the plan in place and be better prepared to mount effective response for any eventuality.

General advice until further notice:

- Organisers of public events that congregate large crowds are being advised to cancel and postpone the event until further notice
- The population in general is advised to refrain from participating in large public gatherings.
- Members of the public are being strongly advised to refrain from travelling abroad.
- Everyone is encouraged to make a special effort to observe good personal hygiene at all times
- Avoid going to public places if you have a respiratory condition that is making you cough and sneeze.
- practice frequent hand washing with soap (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing); and use hand sanitizers where available

General travel measures

Those who must travel abroad should adopt the following precautions at all times:

Avoid crowded places and close contact with people who are unwell or showing symptoms of respiratory illness;

- Observe good personal hygiene at all times
- Practice frequent hand washing with soap (e.g. before handling food or eating, after going to toilet, or when hands are dirtied by respiratory secretions after coughing or sneezing);
- Wear a face mask if you have respiratory symptoms such as a cough or runny nose;
- Avoid contact with live animals and consumption of raw and undercooked meats;
- Cover your mouth with a tissue paper when coughing or sneezing, and dispose the soiled tissue paper in the rubbish bin immediately and wash hands or use alcohol based hand sanitisers;
- All travellers should monitor their health closely for two weeks upon return to Seychelles and seek medical attention promptly if feeling unwell, and also inform their doctor of their travel history;
- If you have a fever or respiratory symptoms (e.g. cough, runny nose), you should wear a face mask and call the clinic ahead of the visit.
- All arriving passengers may be subjected to additional health screening upon arrival

Revised travel measures:

- **Until further notice, No persons (apart from returning citizens and residents of those countries), are allowed to travel to China, including the Special Administrative Region (SAR), South Korea, Italy and Iran.**
- **All returning Seychellois citizen who have been to China, including the SAR, South Korea, Italy and Iran will be put under obligatory quarantine for 14 days upon arrival.**
- **Local trade partners are advised to give all visitors from China, including the SAR South Korea, Italy and Iran and places where there has been significant local transmission, and who were planning to visit the Seychelles in the coming weeks and months, the opportunity to cancel or postpone their holiday at no cost.**

- All foreign workers who are presently in China, South Korea, Italy and Iran and places where there has been extensive local transmission and were planning to return to Seychelles are directed to postpone their return travel until further notice.
- All airlines with inbound flights for Seychelles are directed not to board any passengers or crew (except returning Seychellois citizens) who have been to China (including the SAR), South Korea, Italy and Iran in the last 14 days.
- All arriving passengers may be subjected to additional health screening upon arrival
- Any person arriving in Seychelles by sea (except returning Seychellois citizens) will not be allowed to disembark if he/she has been to China, (including the SAR), South Korea, Italy and Iran and places where there has been extensive local transmission in the last 14 days.
- As of 10th March 2020, all cruise ships will not be allowed entry into Seychelles waters until further notice
- Any marine vessel will not be allowed to enter Seychelles waters if any passenger or crew on board has been to China, South Korea, Italy and Iran in the last 14 days.

Seychelles continues to reinforce its outbreak preparedness and response plan.

Local preparedness measures

- Intensified surveillance at ports of entry
- Active surveillance at health facilities
- Alerts to all medical services/case definition redefining
- Prepositioning of PPE at key locations in public and private medical services
- Establishment of quarantine facilities
- Importation of laboratory supplies and linkages with reference labs/ procurement of testing kits
- Activation of various Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)
- Treatment facility preparedness/Revision of Treatment protocols
- Safe waste management processes and procedures
- Refresher training and retraining in infection prevention and control of concerned staff
- Risk communication and community engagement
- Regular Press updates / Live programme on broadcast media
- Health and Travel advisories updated as required
- Ongoing WHO local office engagement
- Social media engagement to disseminate credible information and dispel rumours and misinformation

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