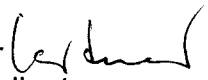




Office of the United Nations  
Resident Coordinator  
联合国机构协调处

Date: 10 April 2003

To: All UN Staff in China  
From: Kerstin Leitner   
Resident Coordinator  
Subject: Advisory Note on SARS in China

1. I would like to inform you that the United Nations Country Team (UNCT) met on 8 April 2003, to review the latest situation of the severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS) situation in China. Based on the consensus reached at the meeting, and further to the WHO China note of 31 March 2003, we would herewith like to emphasize our concern about the seriousness of the viral disease and to provide all staff with guidance and advice on travel-related issues, preventive practices and conduct, in particular in public places. The protection of staff and their families is our highest priority. These guidelines are based on guidance which we have received from the joint medical services of the UN system and WHO.

WHO information on the overall situation in China and other countries can be found at [www.who.int/en/](http://www.who.int/en/).

We all are aware of the unexpected case of SARS by a visiting ILO colleague Mr. Pekka Aro here in Beijing, and his tragic death on Sunday. We are however confident that with strict adherence to the below guidelines we can protect ourselves from any further cases to occur.

*Some basic facts about SARS*

2. SARS is a viral disease, which is transmitted from infected individuals. The ways by which the virus is transmitted is still under investigation, so far droplets from sneezing and coughing have been identified as the most likely route. The reported incubation period is up to 14 days any time during which the infected patients develop the symptoms. The main symptoms of SARS include: high fever (higher than 38°C or 100.4 °F), dry cough, shortness of breath, and flu-like symptoms (e.g. weakness, aching joints, and muscle pain).

3. According to our colleagues at WHO China, the preliminary evidence to-date suggests that people have a high risk of contracting SARS through direct contacts with individuals with full symptoms of SARS, while the risk of getting contracted through secondary contacts is very low. While medical treatment can help patients to survive, preventive measures are the key to avoid a further spread of the virus.

4. As of 7 April 2003, the following places in China have been officially identified by WHO as SARS-affected areas, i.e. Guangdong, Hong Kong, Shanxi and Taiwan. All non-essential travel to these places should be avoided, and all other travel should be cleared by the head of the office. WHO will publish information on the situation in other Chinese provinces and again all travel to such provinces should only be undertaken after consultation with the head of the office.

#### *Preventive measures*

5. It is important for all staff to take preventive measures. It is also important to remember that this a period when many people in Beijing have flus/colds, so not all symptoms will relate to SARS, in fact the vast majority of symptoms will not. Nonetheless, for staff members returning from SARS-affected areas, the following preventive measures should be taken:

- Staff members who are symptom-free and have not been in close contact with a SARS suspected/probable case can resume duty and should remain vigilant in observing if symptoms appear within 14 days.
- Staff members who have already developed or develop symptoms mentioned above should stay away from work and seek a medical exam immediately. The first step should be telephone consultation with a qualified medical person to determine whether an examination visit is advised. The United Family Hospital is available to all staff for such examinations. The staff should also keep their Representative/Director informed.
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6. For staff members who have been in close contact with a suspected/probable case of SARS, the following preventative measures should be taken:

- The staff members should report immediately to their Representative/Director about the exposure to a probable case of SARS, remain away from work and seek a medical examination.
- For a period of 14 days from the time of initial exposure, the staff members should (a) record body temperature daily and remain in contact with their medical services for timely medical checkups, and (b) continue to avoid direct personal social and business interactions. Even contact should be restricted as much as possible with the staff member's own family at home.

- Should symptoms develop (the most consistent first symptom being fever), the staff members should immediately make arrangements to be assessed at a health care facility.

7. For the time being staff members with a normal cold/flu, which can also produce some of the above symptoms, are strongly advised to stay at home until the cold clears and avoid social and business interactions and wear a surgical mask inside their homes and when going out (in particular when using public transport to a health care facility).

### *Recommendations*

8. Based on the current situation, the UNCT recommends the following:

- Missions or travel to the identified SARS-affected areas in China should be restricted to essential travel only. Each agency should check the above given WHO website for the latest listing of affected areas.
- When travelling outside of China, travelers should inquire in advance at the point of destination whether there might be entry restrictions for those coming from China, and should be prepared for health screening procedures at the airport of arrival.
- All travelers should take necessary preventive measures. For example, staff members have the right to refuse to board an airplane if he or she believes that there is a risk of being exposed to SARS.
- If already on the plane and staff members realize that they are seated in the proximity of a passenger with symptoms of SARS they should demand to be re-seated.
- In the worst case that a staff is infected, please note that the Government has arranged three hospitals to treat SARS patients. These are Ditan, the Military Hospital (to specify exactly) and the You'an Hospital. A patient should wear a mask all the time on the way to the hospital.
- Staff members should use their judgment when to wear masks. In any case, the UN staff are advised to wear masks in confined public places.

### *Follow-up action by UNCT*

9. UN premises will be cleaned with disinfectant on a daily basis, in particular public spaces, door knobs and desks.

10. Masks will be made available to all staff who travel on official business in China and abroad.

11. The further evolution of the situation will be monitored very closely and staff will be advised by the office of the Resident Coordinator and/or WHO of any changes on a timely basis. Although SARS constitutes a serious public health challenge to us, we should continue to work normally on our development frontlines. As some countries have issued travel advisory which propose to postpone travel to anywhere in mainland China and Hong Kong at this time, we need to be prepared for the rescheduling of missions, international meetings and workshops.