



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL AFFAIRS

FSM National Government
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February 19, 2020

Dr. Euyoung KO
WHO Country Liason Officer
Palikir, Pohnpei FM 96941

Dear Dr. KO:

This memorandum outlines the public health justification for the **Public Health Emergency Declaration in the Federated States of Micronesia (FSM)** as issued by the President in response to the global threat of novel corona virus (n-CoV) on the 31st of January 2020; and the subsequent Amendment on the 14th of February 2020. The Public Health Emergency Declaration will remain in effect for up to 60 days from date of issue and include details of TRAVEL ADVISORY & RESTRICTIONS to FSM as part of the overall response to the n-CoV global outbreak.

FSM undertook a risk assessment on the 27th of January 2020 after which various preventive and preparedness actions in response to the global threat of n-CoV were initiated. The President with the Public Health Emergency Declaration on the 31st of January 2020 established a National Task Force (NTF) of all relevant government departments with the Department of Health as the Lead Agency and working in collaboration with all Partners to prepare for and respond to the public health threat of n-CoV in FSM. Additionally, Emergency Operation Centers are now established at both national and state levels and working in conjunction with the NTF.

The main goal of all actions being taken is to minimize the risk of importation and local transmission of the n-CoV in the Federated States of Micronesia. This initial containment approach is expected to enhance the ability of the nation to achieve the following specific objectives:

1. Strengthen n-CoV surveillance at all ports of entry to FSM;
2. Reduce public anxiety about the n-CoV and minimize social disruption;
3. Minimize the negative public health and socioeconomic impact of n-CoV in FSM including those related to any preparedness, preventive and response actions;
4. Coordinate effective response to n-CoV by FSM State and National Governments, between FSM and Neighboring Nations, and also with regional and international partners; and to
5. Ensure operational readiness of and response capacity and capabilities by health personnel and facilities to any local cases of n-CoV.

A travel restriction to reduce the movement of people between mainland China and other countries where cases of n-CoV have been reported and FSM is now in place since the Public Health Emergency Declaration of the 31st of January 2020. The President has since issued further amendments and clarification to the declaration to safeguard FSM's preparedness and response capabilities, maintain access to required external technical assistance, reduce threat to the health of the public, minimize negative economic impact, and ensure clarity, proportionality and operational feasibility of the border control directives.

The key provisions of the Public Health Emergency Declaration are that:

- All travels to and from mainland China and FSM including for FSM Nationals is prohibited unless for urgent overseas medical treatment as certified by a physician;
- Until the 28th of February 2020, all travelers from countries with reported cases of n-CoV are prohibited from entering FSM unless previously in another country with no reported n-CoV cases for 14 days prior;
- Travel to and from neighboring US Territories of Guam and Hawaii are permitted as these territories are considered separately from mainland USA;
- FSM Nationals while not prohibited to travel are strongly advised against non-urgent travels to countries with reported cases of n-CoV other than China;
- All Commercial Shipping Vessels from all destinations are allowed into FSM if at sea for at least 14 days after departure from originating port and have not attended any ports where n-CoV has been reported within those 14 days and in addition have not been in contact with another vessels that have stopped at a port where n-CoV has been reported within those 14 days; and

The provisions of the Public Health Emergency Declaration and the travel advisory and restrictions have been put in place after careful consideration of the following factors:

1. High risk of cross-border spread of n-CoV to FSM

- the epicenter of the global transmission of n-CoV remains as mainland China;
- there is a significant risk of international spread from mainland to FSM because of the high traffic between China and FSM;
- the subsequent risk of local transmission of n-CoV from an imported case is a major concern in FSM because of cultural factors such as high levels of physical social contacts, dense community living patterns, and practices such as sharing drinking vessels in social gatherings;

2. Severe Negative Public Health Impact of incident case(s) in FSM

- there is continued uncertainty about the overall epidemiology of the disease with no known effective treatment or vaccines with attendant public anxiety;
- there is very limited Case Management Capacity & Capability in FSM with very limited isolation facilities, sub-optimal infection prevention and control practices, inadequate diagnostic capability, limited stock of appropriate medicines and equipment; limited workforce, and discretionary operational budgets;



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- remoteness of FSM and large distances between States will likely impair coordination, logistics and ability to mount urgent responses to cases or persons under investigation;
- additional pressure on the fragile health systems and operations by a local case will be disproportionate and negatively impact the delivery of routine essential services;
- potential for disproportionate case fatality among incident cases in FSM because current evidence suggests that case severity is worse in people with underlying chronic diseases which is a concern in FSM with a prevalence of 3% and 6% for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease and Diabetes respectively; and
- the heightened nature of public anxiety about the novel nature of the virus.

3. Challenges with balancing negative impact of travel restriction on trade, international travel, economy and population health and wellbeing

- Continued access to imported essential supplies has been considered and hence continuing arrival of commercial shipping vessels to FSM ports have been carefully considered;
- FSM will be reliant on external technical assistance to enhance local n-CoV preparedness and response efforts, hence careful considered continued access to technical assistance is safeguarded within the provisions of the declaration; and
- the current travel advisory and restriction provisions are subject to continual review by the National Task Force supported by technical teams based on active monitoring of the evolution of the global outbreak, robustness of local preparedness and response efforts, surveillance and other emerging evidence on effective control measures against n-CoV.

The Department of Health and other Government Departments with partners will continue the coordinated approach to the preparedness efforts and maintain active surveillance and passenger screenings at the airport and seaport to detect potential cases of n-CoV. The temporary stringent measures of travel restriction during this period as part of the overall response is considered critical to achieving the goal of minimizing the risk of importation and local transmission of n-CoV in FSM.

With the emergency budget provision made available to the National Task Force, over the next few weeks, and up to 28th of February 2020, the Department of Health at the national level and working with counterparts from all the States of FSM will be focused on scaling up preparedness actions in the following areas:

1. Refresher training on infection control measures of all health staff groups and specifically those to be deployed in the event of cases of COVID-19 or SARI locally;
2. Establishment of appropriate isolation and quarantine facilities in each state;
3. Risk communication to the public; and
4. Ensuring that supplies and personnel are deployed to all relevant field locations.

The Department of Health will continue to work with local and international partners, monitor the evolving situation and adapt ongoing measures to prevent and mitigate the risk of local n-CoV transmission.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'L. A. Taulung', written over a horizontal line.

Dr. Livingston A. Taulung