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DIRECTORATE-GENERAL FOR HEALTH AND FOOD SAFETY

Public health, country knowledge, crisis management
Crisis management and preparedness in health

Luxembourg, 12 November 2018

Audio meeting of the Health Security Committee – 12 November 2018

Public Flash report

Survey on preparedness for management of viral haemorrhagic fever cases, and ongoing Ebola outbreak in Democratic Republic of the Congo

Draft ECDC Risk assessment on Smallpox vaccines and preparedness in the EU/EEA

Chair: Wolfgang Philipp, Head of Unit, SANTE C3

Audio participants: BE, CZ, DE, DK, FR, IT, EL, HU, LT, LV, MT, SE, NL, NO, ECHO, RTD, ECDC, WHO Euro

The Chair welcomed the members of the Health Security Committee (HSC) as well as representatives from DG ECHO, DG RTD, ECDC and WHO. The Chair presented the agenda to discuss the ongoing outbreak of Ebola in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, including the results of a survey on preparedness for management of viral haemorrhagic fever cases, and discuss a draft Risk assessment on Smallpox vaccines and preparedness in the EU/EEA produced by ECDC. No further points were added to the agenda.

1. Survey on preparedness for management of viral haemorrhagic fever cases and update on the ongoing Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC)

Survey on preparedness for management of viral haemorrhagic fever cases

A survey was circulated to the HSC in relation to the Ebola outbreak in Equator Province in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), declared on 8 May 2018. The draft report was circulated to the HSC on 24 October. As of 28 October 2018, 24 EU/EEA countries have replied to the survey. Three countries who did not identify themselves on the survey were invited to come forward for the correct attribution of replies in the report.

The Chair presented the results of the survey. It was agreed that the survey will be shared with relevant services in WHO Headquarters in a restricted manner. Further discussion

on the results of the survey may follow during the HSC plenary meeting in December if necessary.

Update on the ongoing Ebola outbreak in DRC

An outbreak of Ebola virus disease is ongoing in North Kivu, Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) since 11 May and as of 10 November, there have been 329 Ebola virus disease cases, of which 294 confirmed and 35 probable, including 205 deaths. The epidemic occurs in the context of prolonged humanitarian crises and an unstable security situation. On 17 October 2018, the IHR Emergency Committee concluded that the epidemic is not at this stage a public health emergency of international concern. ECDC produced an update of the Rapid Risk Assessment on 05 October 2018. SANTE is in close contact with colleagues from ECDC, ECHO, RTD and WHO.

SANTE is currently updating the Medevac guidelines with ECHO and WHO, and will share information on access to vaccines once detailed information from WHO is available.

ECDC gave a short situation update, indicating that this is the largest Ebola outbreak affecting DRC as of today, and reporting on security incidents hindering response measures.

ECHO also updated on the latest number of cases received from the field, and reporting on an improvement of case management and case reporting thanks to a major effort of WHO, as well as on challenges in response related to the security situation in the affected area. Preparedness activities are ongoing in the neighbouring countries (South Sudan and Uganda).

RTD updated on the situation regarding vaccination (more than 20 000 people vaccinated so far since the outbreak started; prophylactic vaccination starting in neighbouring countries) and therapeutics.

WHO Euro commented that so far the event does not meet the criteria of a public health emergency of international concern under the International Health Regulations (IHR). The WHO assessment states that the risk of spread is low at global level, but remains very high at national and regional levels. WHO advises against any restrictions to travel and trade. WHO is continuing to work with partners, including ECHO and neighbouring countries. WHO activities are ongoing in the areas of surveillance; case management; safe and dignified burials; community awareness; points of entry.

- Countries who did not identify themselves on the survey on preparedness for management of viral haemorrhagic fever cases are invited to come forward for the correct attribution of replies in the report;
- SANTE will circulate the results of the survey in a restricted manner to WHO HQ;
- SANTE will monitor the situation closely with ECDC and with the other Commission services and provide updates to the HSC and through EWRS as necessary;
- SANTE will update the Medevac Guidelines with DG ECHO and WHO;
- SANTE will share information on access to vaccines once detailed information from WHO is available;
- SANTE will circulate the updated survey on preparedness and management of viral haemorrhagic cases.

2. Risk assessment on Smallpox vaccines and preparedness in the EU/EEA

ECDC presented a draft Risk assessment on Smallpox vaccines and preparedness in the EU/EEA, which was produced in close collaboration with EMA and WHO. This was discussed by the HSC.

- The smallpox risk assessment will be revised based on comments from the Member States.

2. AOB

No other issues were raised.

SANTE thanked participants and closed the meeting.