Current Situation

On 31 December 2019, WHO was alerted to several cases of pneumonia in Wuhan City, Hubei Province of China. One week later, on 7 January 2020, Chinese authorities confirmed that they had identified a novel (new) coronavirus as the cause of the pneumonia. The proposed interim name of the virus is 2019-nCoV. Since the first cases were reported, WHO and its partners have been working with Chinese authorities and global experts to learn more about the virus, including how it is transmitted, the populations most at risk, the spectrum of clinical disease, and the most effective ways to detect, interrupt, and contain transmission.

Epidemiological evidence shows that 2019-nCoV can be transmitted from one individual to another. During previous outbreaks due to other coronaviruses, including Middle-East respiratory syndrome (MERS-CoV) and the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), human-to-human transmission most commonly occurred through droplets, personal contact, and contaminated objects. The modes of transmission of 2019-nCoV are likely to be similar.

The precise origin of the 2019-nCoV is still uncertain. The virus has been identified in environmental samples from a live animal market in Wuhan, and some human cases have been epidemiologically linked to this market. Other coronavirus, such as SARS and MERS, are zoonotic, and can be transmitted from animals to humans.

On 30 January 2020, the Director-General of WHO declared the 2019-nCoV outbreak a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations (2005), following advice from the Emergency Committee. The Director-General and Emergency Committee issued temporary recommendations to the People’s Republic of China and to other countries, as well as to WHO.
The strategy is based on several planning assumptions. Owing to the uncertainty surrounding the extent of the outbreak within China, the transmissibility of the virus, and the clinical spectrum of the disease, it will be necessary to regularly update these assumptions. The main elements of the strategy are:

A) Establishing international coordination and operational support
   - Partner coordination at global, regional and country level
   - Epidemiological analysis and forecasting
   - Risk communication and managing the infodemic
   - Laboratory and diagnostics
   - Clinical technical expertise and guidance
   - Technical expertise and guidance
   - Pandemic supply chain coordination
   - Travel and Trade

B) Country Readiness and Response Operations
   - Country-level coordination
   - Risk communication and community engagement
   - Surveillance, Points of Entry
   - Rapid response teams
   - National laboratory system
   - Infection prevention and control
   - Case management and continuity of essential services
   - Logistics, procurement and supply management

C) Accelerating priority research and innovation
   - Enhancing global coordination of all relevant stakeholders
   - Support a clear and transparent global research and innovation priority setting process
   - Build common platforms for standardized processes, protocols and tools, sharing specimens, data, and information

Global Preparedness and Response Plan

WHO and partners have developed a global strategic preparedness and response plan, which outlines the public health measures that the international community stands ready to provide to support all countries to prepare for and respond to 2019-nCoV. The plan describes what we have learned so far about the virus and translates that knowledge into strategic action that can guide the efforts of all national and international partners when developing context-specific national and regional operational plans.

The overall goal is to stop further transmission of 2019-nCoV within China and to other countries, and to mitigate the impact of the outbreak in all countries.

The strategic objectives for the plan are to:

- Limit human-to-human transmission, including reducing secondary infections among close contacts and healthcare workers, preventing transmission amplification events, and preventing further international spread from China;
- Identify, isolate, and care for patients early, including providing optimized care for infected patients;
- Identify and reduce transmission from the animal source;
- Address crucial knowledge gaps regarding clinical severity, extent of transmission and infection, treatment options, and accelerate the development of diagnostics, therapeutics, and vaccines;
- Communicate critical risk and event information to all communities, and counter misinformation;
- Minimize social and economic impact through multisectoral partnerships.