

**TUESDAY: 28TH APRIL 2009**

**NO. 0712**

**NOVEL FLU VIRUS UPDATE**

The Health Division informs the public that following a meeting of the Committee of Experts held yesterday evening, the Director General of the WHO has declared that the Pandemic Alert phase has been raised from level 3 to level 4. This means that it is now confirmed that there are small clusters of influenza caused by a new virus which has limited human to human transmission. This does not mean that a pandemic has been declared but the risk of it developing is considered to be higher. It is still possible that a pandemic may be averted.

Latest official reports this morning show that globally there are 21 countries where suspected cases have been reported including 10 EU member states. So far a total of 1,759 suspected cases have been reported with 51 coming from EU member states. There have only been 79 cases globally and 3 cases in the EU which have been confirmed to be due to the H1N1 virus. Most of the cases reported in the EU have had a travel connection with Mexico.

The EU commission has asked the Czech Presidency to convene an extraordinary Council meeting of Health Ministers. This will be held in Luxembourg on Thursday afternoon where Health ministers will be briefed of the latest developments and decisions on any action to be taken will be made.

In Malta, so far, there has been no suspected cases which have been reported. Following the press briefing yesterday, the Division had no people phoning seeking advice following a trip to Mexico, though a number of people phoned to seek advice about travel in general. The WHO still recommends no travel restriction though it considers it prudent for people who are ill, to delay international travel and for people developing symptoms following international travel to seek medical attention as advised by the health authorities.

The change in the pandemic alert phase from phase 3 to phase 4 does not require any major interventions from authorities. The Health Division is taking all the action necessary in terms of our pandemic plan to ensure that if and when a pandemic is declared or we have suspected cases reported or confirmed we will have everything in place to deal with the situation. In this respect, meetings and arrangements within the various health care establishments are taking place.

Finally the Health Division must once again stress that there is no reason for alarm or panic. The Division will continue to be vigilant in the surveillance, and urges everyone to continue with their activities in a normal manner.

**DOI – 28.04.2009**