Geneva, 24 May 2016 – The Director-General of the World Health Organization has presented letters of certification to Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs) from China and Russia confirming that they are capable of providing mobile emergency field hospitals and staff members in response to natural disasters and disease outbreaks.

"I would like to thank both countries for their participation in this process and congratulate them on this worthy achievement," said Dr Margaret Chan.

The Emergency Medical Teams (EMTs), one from China and two from Russia, completed WHO's rigorous classification process. "This means that, when a disaster strikes and an affected country requests help, we can quickly deploy medical teams that we know meet our high standards," added Dr Chan.

Today, Dr Chan will meet with the Head of EMERCOM's (Emergency Ministry of the Russian Federation) field hospital, Dr Igor Yakirevitch, and Head of Zaschita field hospital, Dr Valery Shabanov, to present certification letters to the respective EMTs. On Sunday, 22 May, Dr Chan met with EMT Lead Dr Zhongmin Liu to present the certificate to China's National Emergency Rescue Team Shanghai.

China and Russia were among the first countries to sign up for the classification process. China's and Russia's teams demonstrated commitment to the Organization's guiding principles for patient care and met the standards outlined in the *Classification and Minimum Standards for Foreign (Emergency) Medical Teams in Sudden Onset Disasters.*

"The classification process follows months of engagement with WHO through a peer-to-peer mentoring programme, which provides support from committed experts," said Dr Ian Norton, who leads WHO's work on EMTs.

More than 60 EMTs from 25 countries are working towards meeting minimum standards required by WHO. That number is expected to rise to as many as 200 teams. WHO works with governments and organizations to register medical teams from around the world.

During emergencies, EMTs play a critical role by providing surge support to national health systems through the delivery of clinical care to disaster-affected populations. By classifying EMTs, WHO can assure disaster-affected governments and their populations of predictable and timely responses by well-trained medical personnel and self-sufficient teams.