3 October 2013 - WHO has been informed of an additional six laboratory-confirmed cases of Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) infection in Saudi Arabia.

The six new patients are from Riyadh region with ages from 14 to 79 years old, of which three are women and three men. The dates of onset of the patients range from 15 to 26 September 2013. One patient has mild symptoms while the others are hospitalized. Three patients are contacts of previously confirmed cases with MERS-CoV, two are reported to have had no exposure to animals or a confirmed case, and there is no information on exposure of one patient.
Globally, from September 2012 to date, WHO has been informed of a total of 136 laboratory-confirmed cases of infection with MERS-CoV, including 58 deaths.

Based on the current situation and available information, WHO encourages all Member States to continue their surveillance for severe acute respiratory infections (SARI) and to carefully review any unusual patterns.
Health care providers are advised to maintain vigilance. Recent travellers returning from the Middle East who develop SARI should be tested for MERS-CoV as advised in the current surveillance recommendations.
Specimens from patients' lower respiratory tracts should be obtained for diagnosis where possible. Clinicians are reminded that MERS-CoV infection should be considered even with atypical signs and symptoms, such as diarrhoea, in patients who are immunocompromised.

Health care facilities are reminded of the importance of systematic implementation of infection prevention and control (IPC). Health care facilities that provide care for patients suspected or confirmed with MERS-CoV infection should take appropriate measures to decrease the risk of transmission of the virus to other patients, health care workers and visitors.

All Member States are reminded to promptly assess and notify WHO of any new case of infection with MERS-CoV, along with information about potential exposures that may have resulted in infection and a description of the clinical course. Investigation into the source of exposure should promptly be initiated to identify the mode of exposure, so that further transmission of the virus can be prevented.

WHO does not advise special screening at points of entry with regard to this event nor does it currently recommend the application of any travel or trade restrictions.
WHO has convened an Emergency Committee under the International Health Regulations (IHR) to advise the Director-General on the status of the current situation. The Emergency Committee, which comprises international experts from all WHO Regions, unanimously advised that, with the information now available, and using a risk-assessment approach, the conditions for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) have not at present been met.