

## **Poliomyelitis**

### **Temporary recommendations regarding the international spread of wild poliovirus: considerations concerning their continuation in light of Article 15.3 of the International Health Regulations (2005)**

1. The Director-General declared the current international spread of wild poliovirus a public health emergency of international concern under the International Health Regulations (2005) on 5 May 2014, shortly before the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly. Temporary recommendations in respect of the emergency were issued at the same time and have been renewed, with some modifications, four times since then upon the advice of the Emergency Committee convened by the Director-General, in accordance with Article 12 of the Regulations, concerning ongoing events and the evolving situation of transmission and associated risks of international spread of poliovirus. The Emergency Committee held its fifth meeting on 24 April 2015; it advised the Director-General to extend the status of public health emergency of international concern for polio and the existing temporary recommendations with a number of amendments. The Committee also advised that in view of the evolving situation, particularly the imminent commencement of the season of high poliovirus transmission, periodic review and assessment of the risk of international spread and measures to mitigate these risks are warranted.
2. The Director-General, taking into account the Committee's advice, confirmed that the current international spread of wild poliovirus continues to constitute a public health emergency of international concern and extended the current temporary recommendations as amended by the Committee.
3. The International Health Regulations (2005) do not impose a time limit on the duration of a public health emergency of international concern; in contrast, Article 15.3 of the Regulations (2005) states that "[t]emporary recommendations may not continue beyond the second World Health Assembly after the determination of the public health emergency of international concern to which they relate".
4. The May 2015 Health Assembly is the second Health Assembly after the declaration of the polio situation as a public health emergency of international concern and the issuance of temporary recommendations. The Director-General is of the view that Article 15.3, interpreted in the light of the objective and purpose of the International Health Regulations (2005), does not intend to cut off unconditionally the duration of temporary recommendations. Article 15.3 must rather be read as enabling the Health Assembly to review the management of a public health emergency of international concern through temporary recommendations. Indeed, the fact that the time-limit provided in Article 15.3 is based on the occurrence of the Health Assembly suggests that the Health Assembly intended to avoid the possible indefinite extension of temporary recommendations and enable it to review the management of a public health emergency of international concern through temporary recommendations.

## **ACTION BY THE HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

5. Considering the evolving risk of international spread of wild poliovirus and the necessity for periodic review and relevant amendments in recommended risk mitigation measures, the Health Assembly is invited to endorse the continuation of the management of the public health emergency of international concern through temporary recommendations, based on the continued advice of an Emergency Committee convened in three-month intervals (at the maximum). At the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly, the Director-General will report on progress toward reduction in the risk of international spread of wild poliovirus.

6. The Health Assembly is invited also to adopt the following draft decision:

The Sixty-eighth World Health Assembly, having considered the report of the Secretariat,<sup>1</sup> (1) endorsed the continuation of the management of the public health emergency of international concern through temporary recommendations issued by the Director-General under the International Health Regulations (2005) in connection with the public health emergency of international concern arising from the international spread of wild poliovirus, and (2) requested the Director-General to report on progress towards reduction in the risk of international spread of wild poliovirus to the Sixty-ninth World Health Assembly.

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<sup>1</sup> Document A68/21 Add.3.