



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

**WHO DECLARES 2019-NCOV ARD ‘PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN’; PHIL GOV’T ISSUES TRAVEL BAN**  
Press Release/31 January 2020

The World Health Organization (WHO) today declared the novel coronavirus acute respiratory disease (2019-nCoV ARD) health event as a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC) after an emergency committee convened on January 30, in Geneva, Switzerland.

To date, the WHO Emergency Committee on Novel Coronavirus under the International Health Regulations does not recommend the imposition of any travel or trade restrictions, but respects the sovereign power of member states to impose measures aimed at protecting the health of its constituents. The Philippine Government, upon the recommendation of DOH, has issued a temporary travel ban covering all travellers coming from Hubei Province of China. DOH will also be recommending the expansion of the travel ban coverage to more Chinese provinces as new information on the increasing number of cases per region arises.

In the Philippines, the DOH reported an additional two (2) patients under investigation (PUIs) as of 12 NN today, bringing the total recorded number of PUIs to thirty-one (31). Twenty-three (23) PUIs are currently admitted and isolated, while six (6) have been discharged but are still under strict monitoring. DOH also reported one (1) confirmed case and one (1) PUI mortality.

DOH is assuring the public that the first confirmed case is isolated and being properly treated, and that contact tracing is being conducted in coordination with the Bureau of Quarantine, Epidemiology Bureau and other government agencies. Stricter infection control measures are also being implemented in hospitals with PUIs both for patients and health workers.

“With this declaration comes the need to be more vigilant. I continue to urge everyone to practice precautionary measures, such as observing proper hygiene, following cough etiquette, avoiding crowded places, eating nutritious food such as fruits and vegetables, and hydrating oneself,” Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said.

“For our health workers, I strongly advise you to wear protective personnel equipment such as disposable face mask, gown, and gloves when in contact with a patient’s blood, body fluids or secretions, in keeping with prevailing hospital protocols. I also remind our health staff to ensure proper disposal of hospital waste. I urge you to wash your hospital laundry thoroughly, boost your immunity by taking vitamins, and monitor yourselves for any signs and symptoms. Your health and safety is of paramount concern to the Department,” he concluded.