The **fourth meeting of the Emergency Committee** convened by the Director-General under the International Health Regulations (2005) [IHR (2005)] concerning
MERS-CoV
was held by teleconference on Wednesday, 4 December 2013, from 12:00 to 15:50 Geneva time (CET).

In addition to Members of the Emergency Committee, two expert advisors also participated[1]. A number of affected States Parties reporting recent cases of MERS-CoV – Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait, Oman, Qatar and Spain – were also on the teleconference.

During the informational session of the meeting, the WHO Secretariat provided an update on and assessment of epidemiological and scientific developments, including a description of cases over time, notable recent clusters, detection by polymerase chain reaction testing of MERS-CoV in camels, and the public health preparation and experience of the Hajj pilgrimage.

The above affected States Parties presented on recent developments in their countries.

After discussion and deliberation on the information provided, the Committee concluded that it saw no reason to change its previous advice to the Director-General. Based on a risk assessment of current information, it was the unanimous decision of the Committee that the conditions for a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) have not at present been met.

The situation continues to be of concern, in view of ongoing cases and of new information about the presence of the virus in camels. Although it still does not consider the events to constitute a PHEIC, the Committee reinforced its previous advice for consideration by WHO and Member States, as follows:
strengthening surveillance, including in countries with pilgrims;

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continuing to increase awareness and effective risk communication concerning MERS-CoV;

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supporting countries that are particularly vulnerable, especially in sub-Saharan Africa, taking into account the regional challenges;

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increasing relevant diagnostic testing capacities;

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continuing with investigative work, including identifying the source of the virus and relevant exposures through case-control studies and other research;

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timely sharing of information in accordance with the International Health Regulations (2005) and ongoing active coordination with WHO.

Based on events since its last meeting, the Committee emphasized the need for:

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investigative studies, including international case-control, serological, environmental, and animal-human interface studies, to better understand risk factors and the epidemiology;

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further review and strengthening of such tools as standardized case definitions and surveillance and further emphasis on infection control and prevention.

The Committee commended the extensive public health preparation for, surveillance and management of the Hajj pilgrimage by the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

As it has since the initial meeting, the WHO Secretariat continues to provide regular updates to the Committee Members and Advisors. With regard to reconvening the Committee, it was suggested that March 2014 might be an appropriate time (i.e. after the Northern Hemisphere winter). It was noted that any serious developments may require re-convening the Committee before then.

Based on this advice and the currently available information, the Director-General accepted the Committee's assessment. The Director-General thanked the Committee Members and Advisors for their advice.

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[1] The names and summary biographies of the Advisor and the Emergency Committee Members are available below.

List of Emergency Committee Members and Advisors
Biographies of Emergency Committee Members and Advisors