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Novel Coronavirus Outbreak

Item 1: Current Situation Update

1. The CHAIR invited the Government Chief Medical Officer (CMO) to give a situation update. The CMO said that novel coronavirus case numbers in South East Asia were rising quickly and that this trend was likely to continue. That the overall figure for people infected with novel coronavirus in China was likely to be higher than had been reported as the Chinese authorities had implemented a strict case definition, which meant that they were only testing people who had a connection to the Hubei province or have recently been exposed to someone who has visited the Hubei province.
2. Continuing the CMO said that (emerging scientific evidence from international cases suggested):
 - On average, individuals who had died as a result of the novel coronavirus had spent between seven to ten days in hospital before dying - the longest recorded period between symptom onset and death had been 41 days.
 - The two most high-risk groups appeared to be the elderly and those with pre-existing illnesses.
 - As yet there had been no recorded cases of children dying and therefore they were presumed to be at low risk from the virus.
 - The fatality rate estimate remained at 2-3 per cent.
3. The CHAIR invited the Minister of State at the Foreign and Commonwealth Office to give an update on assisted departures. The MINISTER OF STATE AT THE FOREIGN AND COMMONWEALTH OFFICE said that the UK's second assisted departure flight was expected to depart Wuhan on the 7 February carrying Foreign and Commonwealth Office staff, Ministry of Defence medical staff and 127 British nationals/dependents. Seats had been offered to other European nationals but the details and numbers of European Nationals had yet to be confirmed.
4. The CHAIR invited the Permanent Secretary for the Department of Health and Social Care to confirm the arrangements for the isolation of British nationals and their dependents upon arrival in the UK. The PERMANENT SECRETARY FOR THE DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE said the Department of Health and Social Care had been exploring three commercial residential locations; Oxford, Milton Keynes, or Stratford. The Department of Health and Social Care expected to finalise plans by the end of the day and inform relevant departments accordingly.
5. Summing up the CHAIR highlighted that there were no legal powers in place to force nationals into isolation. However, all passengers on the flight were required to sign contracts before boarding, stating that if they did not comply with the isolation plans they would be liable to pay costs for their repatriations.

Item 2: Options for limiting transmission

6. The CHAIR invited the CMO to summarise the latest scientific advice on limiting the transmission of the novel coronavirus into the UK. The CMO said that the latest advice from the Scientific Advisory Group for Emergencies (SAGE) estimated that if the UK reduced imported infections by 50 per cent, it was expected that the the onset of any epidemic in the UK by would be delayed by about five days; if this was increased to 75 per cent it would be delayed by ten days; to 90 per cent 15 days and 95 per cent plus delayed for potentially a month.