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The Minister of Health and Medical Industry
Ministry of Health and Medical Industry
Archabil shayoly 20
744036 Ashgabat
Turkmenistan

Your reference:

19 OCT 2010

Sir,

Certification of malaria elimination in Turkmenistan

I have the honour to inform you that based on the assessments of the malaria situation in Turkmenistan by the World Health Organization (WHO) evaluation teams in 2009 and 2010, the subsequent WHO expert review, and the final recommendation from the Chairman of the *20th meeting of the WHO Expert Committee on Malaria*, WHO has decided to add Turkmenistan to the list of countries where malaria elimination has been achieved.

The malaria-free status of Turkmenistan will be published in the WHO *Weekly Epidemiological Record* and given notice during the Sixty-fourth World Health Assembly in May 2011.

The confirmation of malaria elimination in Turkmenistan refers to the situation at present and the likelihood that elimination can be maintained. Turkmenistan will be expected to continue reporting on the maintenance of the malaria-free status on an annual basis to the WHO Regional Office for Europe (EURO). In addition, in the event of local transmission of *P. falciparum* in Turkmenistan, this must be reported immediately to EURO, so that necessary assistance can be provided and a travel alert raised, should this be indicated.

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... ENCL:(1)

cc: The WHO Liaison Officer, WHO Country Office, Ashgabat
Professor Walther H. Wernsdorfer, Chairman of the *20th Expert Committee on Malaria*,
Institute of Specific Prophylaxis and Tropical Medicine, Medical University of
Vienna, Vienna

19 OCT 2010

... Furthermore, I enclose as an Annex the observations/recommendations of the members of the *WHO Expert Committee on Malaria* summarizing important comments concerning technical issues meriting your follow-up in the context of the consultations for the certification of the malaria-free status of Turkmenistan. It is felt that the implementation of these recommendations will facilitate the maintenance of the malaria-free status. WHO will be ready for consultation on addressing the issues pertaining to these recommendations.

In light of the wealth of expertise on malaria elimination in Turkmenistan, we look forward to continued technical cooperation with Turkmenistan on this topic, including international training activities on malaria elimination.

Please accept, Sir, the assurance of my highest consideration.



Dr Margaret Chan
Director-General

Certification of malaria elimination in Turkmenistan
Recommendations of members of the WHO Expert Committee on Malaria

1. In order to strengthen surveillance at the border of Turkmenistan and Afghanistan, the health authorities may like to consider the use of rapid diagnostic tests (RDTs) for the quick diagnosis of malaria in persons coming from Afghanistan. Although the specific sensitivity of the RDT for *Plasmodium vivax* is below 100% and does not render microscopic diagnosis superfluous, time towards detection and treatment can be shortened and risk of secondary transmission avoided in many cases.
2. Although internal quality control of the parasitological laboratory activities seems to be functioning relatively well, it may be envisaged to also introduce an external quality control mechanism within the country. This should be based on re-checking of representative samples by polymerase chain reaction (PCR). It is expected that one or more laboratories of academic or research institutions in Turkmenistan run PCR examinations. Their collaboration could be engaged in this endeavour.
3. As chloroquine-resistance of *Plasmodium vivax* has been reported from several south-east Asian areas, it may be advisable to train one or more laboratory technicians in the test procedures for the determination of drug sensitivity (*in vivo* and *in vitro*). This training would have to take place essentially abroad.
4. The absence of recent information on insecticide sensitivity of the local anopheline species points to potential deficiencies in the entomological services. It has been therefore recommended to assess and improve the structure and competence of the entomological services with particular attention to its functions in preventing the re-introduction of malaria. Regular surveys in the former foci of malaria transmission, as well as the monitoring of the vector populations and their response to insecticides are an important part of these activities.
5. Since the importation of malaria cases from Afghanistan is currently the major, or only, potential cause of a re-establishment of malaria transmission in Turkmenistan, the exchange of relevant information on population movement and epidemiological data should be encouraged. This could be facilitated by the services of the WHO Regional Offices for Europe (EURO) and the Eastern Mediterranean (EMRO).

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