



Ref.: C.L.23.1994

The Director-General presents his compliments to the Governments of the Member States of the World Health Organization and has the honour to refer to the International Health Regulations adopted by the Twenty-second World Health Assembly in 1969 and subsequently amended by the Twenty-sixth and Thirty-fourth World Health Assemblies in 1973 and 1981 respectively. The Regulations, which were adopted under Article 21 of the Constitution of the Organization, enter into force with respect to Member States who have not notified the Director-General of their rejection or reservation within periods prescribed in the Regulations.

It has come to the attention of the Director-General that the Governments of some Member States may have adopted measures affecting travel from India to their territories in response to the recent outbreak of cases of plague in that country that are not consistent with the International Health Regulations. It has been reported that some Governments are no longer issuing any visas for individuals travelling from India to enter the territory of the States concerned or are requiring "plague-free" certification as a condition for the issuance of such visas.

Article 23 of the International Health Regulations stipulates that "The health measures permitted by these Regulations are the maximum measures applicable to international traffic, which a State may require for the protection of its territory against the diseases subject to the Regulations." It must be noted that plague is one of the diseases covered by the Regulations and that "plague-free" certification is not one of the measures affecting international traffic that are authorized to be taken by States for the protection of their territory. Consequently, the requirement of such certification as a condition for the issuance of visas is inconsistent with the provisions of the International Health Regulations. Furthermore, any decision to cease issuing visas for individuals to travel from a country in which cases of plague have been reported, although without necessarily stating the reasons for the decision, would appear not to be in conformity with the spirit of the Regulations in this regard.

The Director-General wishes to bring this matter to the attention of the Governments of all Member States of the Organization for their information and action as appropriate.

The Director-General takes this opportunity to renew to the Governments of the Member States of the Organization the assurance of his highest consideration.

GENEVA, 27 October 1994