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**Note for the press N°17
17 June 2003****WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION CHANGES TRAVEL
RECOMMENDATION FOR TAIWAN PROVINCE, CHINA**

Effective today, the World Health Organization (WHO) is removing its recommendation that people should postpone all but essential travel to Taiwan province in China.

The recommendation to consider postponing all but essential travel to Taiwan province, China was issued on 21 May, 2003 in order to minimize the international spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). WHO is changing this recommendation as the situation in this area has now improved significantly. Improvements in case detection, infection control, and the tracing and follow-up of contacts have led to a steep drop in the daily number of new cases. WHO has carefully reviewed this information and it suggests that SARS is no longer a potential threat to international travellers to Taiwan province, China.

"The SARS crisis in Taiwan has been taken very seriously at all levels," said Dr Cathy Roth, a WHO virologist who was in Taiwan in May to assess the need for a strengthened response. "SARS stimulated vast and very rapid improvements in the health infrastructure, especially in the areas of hospital infection control procedures, systems for data collection and reporting, mobilization of the public, and coordination of all agencies contributing to the outbreak response. We hope these improvements are permanent," Dr Roth stressed.

The decision to lift a travel advisory is based on consideration of several criteria, including the magnitude of current SARS cases, the pattern of recent local transmission, and evidence that cases are no longer being exported.

On 27 March, WHO recommended that areas with recent local transmission should screen all international departing passengers to ensure that those who are sick with SARS or are contacts of SARS cases do not travel. This recommendation is still valid for Beijing, Hong Kong and Taiwan in China, and Toronto, Canada. For a summary of travel recommendations, see the table below.

The number of new and current SARS cases continues to decline globally. However WHO stresses that one case of SARS left undetected can spark a new outbreak. WHO urges continued high level vigilance globally to identify, isolate, and treat all SARS cases and undertake rapid contact tracing and follow-up.

Summary of WHO measures related to international travel

Country	Area	Exit screening for international travellers departing the area	Traveller to consider postponing all but essential travel to the area
Canada	Toronto	YES	NO
China	Beijing	YES	YES
China	Hong Kong Special Administrative Region	YES	NO
China	Taiwan	YES	NO

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