



NOTE FOR THE PRESS

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WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION CHANGES LAST REMAINING TRAVEL RECOMMENDATION – FOR BEIJING, CHINA

Effective today, the World Health Organization (WHO) is removing its recommendation that people should postpone all but essential travel to Beijing, China. Beijing was the last area in the world to which this advice still applied.

The recommendation to consider postponing all but essential travel to Beijing was issued on 23 April in order to minimize the international spread of Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS). WHO is changing this recommendation as the situation in the Chinese capital has now improved significantly. The last new case in Beijing was isolated on May 29, since when a number of suspect cases have been considered but ruled out as SARS.

"We are changing the travel advice for Beijing effective Tuesday, June 24," said Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland, Director-General of WHO. "Beijing is the last area to which WHO recommended that people should postpone all but essential travel. This is very good news and shows the great progress the world has made against SARS."

Recommendations to postpone travel have been issued following consideration of several factors, including the magnitude of probable SARS cases, the pattern of recent local transmission, and the last dates cases were exported.

On 27 March, WHO recommended that all 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. Since then, a number of recommendations have been made that people should postpone all but essential travel to areas with large outbreaks of SARS which posed a potential threat to travellers.

More than 20 days have now passed since the last new case was isolated in Beijing. Therefore, Beijing has also been removed from the list of areas with recent local transmission.

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