

**NO NEW CASES OF H5N1 AVIAN INFLUENZA SINCE DECEMBER 1997**

Submission by Hong Kong, China

The following communication was received from Hong Kong, China on 4 January 1999.

1. There have been no new cases of H5N1 avian influenza in the Hong Kong Special Administrative Region (HKSAR) since 29 December 1997.
2. The Government of the HKSAR has been taking prompt and effective measures to prevent re-occurrence of H5N1 avian influenza cases. After eradicating all chickens in the territory at the end of December 1997, we have put in place strengthened surveillance for all imported live birds, including poultry (see G/LIC/N/1/HKG/4 dated 12 June 1998). As at 18 December 1998, 18,398 consignments (or about 240,000 samples) of imported chickens and other non-aquatic poultry have been tested. No evidence of active infection with H5N1 influenza virus has been detected.
3. On-farm testing of birds has also been introduced for local poultry farms, along with new licensing conditions covering hygiene and management practices. All flocks are serologically tested during the growing period, and so far all farms were found to remain free from infection with H5 influenza.
4. In the press release WHO/17 issued on 28 January 1998, the World Health Organization (WHO) "stressed that there is no public health reason for other countries to ban the importation of chicken and chicken products from China, including Hong Kong". Before issuing the press release, a WHO team visited the HKSAR and southern China to observe the situations there. Top world experts on influenza from the WHO and six countries have issued a joint Proclamation of Appreciation on 4 December 1998 to the Government of the HKSAR in recognition of its vigorous and carefully considered action against the avian virus outbreak last year.
5. In the light of the above developments, we urge any Members who are still maintaining import bans or other measures against birds, poultry and related products exported from the HKSAR as a result of the incident to withdraw their measures as soon as practicable. In this connection, we are pleased to note that several WTO Members have already lifted their import bans and have made WTO notifications to that effect.
6. Hong Kong, China will be pleased to provide any further information to interested Members.