REPUBLIC OF KOREA-WHO MERS JOINT MISSION messages to public:

With respect to the joint Republic of Korea/WHO mission, interactions have been excellent. There has been an open and candid exchange of information and experience, including the provision of detailed information about the outbreak and the control measures put into place, as well as discussion of existing challenges. Current efforts to control the outbreak and prevent further spread are being intensified.

Whenever an emerging pathogen like the MERS virus appears in a new setting (for example, in a new country), a timely and thorough investigation is critical, particularly to assess whether the virus and its transmission are changing, and to ensure implementation of the most appropriate control strategies.

The evidence presented thus far suggests that the pattern of the outbreak in the Republic of Korea may be similar to MERS outbreaks that have taken place in health care facilities in the Middle East. However, the situation is rapidly evolving and investigations are ongoing.
INITIAL RECOMMENDATIONS to the Korean Government as of 10 June 2015

Infection prevention and control measures should immediately be strengthened in all facilities across the country.

All patients presenting with fever or respiratory symptoms should be asked about: contact with a MERS patient; visits to a health care facility where a MERS patient has been treated; and history of travel to the Middle East in the 14 days before symptom onset. Any patient with positive responses should be promptly reported to public health authorities and managed as a suspected case while the diagnosis is being confirmed.

Close contacts of MERS cases should not travel during the period when they are being monitored for the development of symptoms.

Strong consideration should be given to re-opening schools, as schools have not been linked to transmission of MERS-CoV in the Republic of Korea or elsewhere.