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|  | Press Release | | | |
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WHO evaluation indicates ROK’s strong capacity for public health emergency response

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| **◇ Completed the WHO JEE to evaluate the current systems for public health emergency preparedness and response**  **◇ ROK’s capacity for public health emergency response has improved since the MERS-CoV outbreak**  **◇ JEE results will be used to revise national action plans** |

□ In order to conduct objective evaluation of the Republic of Korea’s national system for preparation and response to public health emergencies, the Ministry of Health and Welfare (under Minister Park Neunghoo) and the Korea Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (under Director Jeong Eun-Kyeong) completed the WHO Joint External Evaluation, which was held from August 27th to September 1st, 2017.

□ At the KCDC, located in Osong, the WHO JEE team (under Dr. Ronald St. John, Canada) and the Korean JEE team (under Director Jee Youngmee of the KCDC Center for Infectious Disease Research) conducted JEE through discussion sessions with the Ministry of Health and Welfare, the KCDC, and relevant ministries/agencies\* to evaluate 19 different technical areas.

\* Ministry of Agriculture, Food, and Rural Affairs/Animal and Plant Quarantine Agency, Ministry of Environment, Ministry of Food and Drug Safety, Nuclear Safety and Security Commission/Korea Institute of Nuclear Safety

ㅇ ROK’s response capacity was observed through field visits to the Incheon International Airport Quarantine Station, Gwangmyeong Public Health Center, Seoul Research Institute of Health and Environment, 1339 Call Center, and the Ministry of the Interior and Safety EOC.

ㅇ Based on the self-evaluations conducted by ROK’s own internal JEE task force, the international JEE team led discussions to determine the scores for each respective technical area. The main focus of this process was to provide an assessment of areas needing improvement, as well as recommendations on how those improvements could be made.

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| \* 19 Technical Areas for Evaluation | | | |
| Prevention (7) | Detection (4) | Response (5) | Others (3) |
| 1: National Legislation,  Policy, and Financing  2: IHR Coordination, Communication, and Advocacy  3: Antimicrobial  Resistance  4: Zoonotic Diseases  5: Food Safety  6: Biosafety/Biosecurity  7: Immunization | 8: National Laboratory  System  9: Real-time  Surveillance  10: Reporting  11: Workforce  Development | 12: Preparedness  13: Emergency  Response Operation  14: Linking Public  Health Security  Authorities  15: Medical  Countermeasures and  Personnel Deployment  16: Risk  Communication | 17: Point of Entry  18: Chemical Events  19: Radiation  Emergencies |

□ JEE International Team Lead Dr. Ronald St. John acknowledged that ROK had learned a lot from the MERS outbreak, reflecting these lessons in reforms of the national system for infectious disease prevention. He also stated that these reforms were a sign of change in ROK’s approach to public health emergencies.

ㅇ Dr. St. John commended ROK’s immunization and vaccination program for its high accessibility and coverage, the Division of Antimicrobial Resistance for its surveillance and risk assessment efforts, the Division of Risk Assessment and International Cooperation and the EOC for their strengthening of the infectious disease emergency response system, and the radiation emergencies program for its various training and exercises.

ㅇ Dr. St. John recommended that ROK will need to make ongoing financial investments for public health emergencies. He also emphasized the need for strengthening relevant systems and the capacity of the IHR NFP to coordinate with relevant ministries/agencies; promoting ongoing education of human resources across all areas; and establishing a system for the exchange of human resources and medical supplies during public health emergencies both at home and abroad.

ㅇ While ROK received outstanding scores in most areas, the evaluation results showed room for improvement in **risk communication and creating a priority system for securing resources during emergencies.**

\*For a total of 48 areas, ROK received a score of 5 in 29 areas (60.4%), 4 in 15 areas (31.3%), and 3 in 4 areas (8.3%)

ㅇTaking into consideration ROK’s strong capacity for public health emergency response, the **WHO** formally requested the ROK’s support of and collaboration with other member states to further strengthen public health security in the Western Pacific Region and at the global level.

ㅇ The final report from this JEE mission will be released on the WHO website in around two months.

\* External release of the report through the WHO website (<https://extranet.who.int/spp/ihr-monitoring-evaluation>)

□ Based on this Joint External Evaluation, the Ministry of Health and Welfare and the KCDC plan to ensure that follow-up action is taken to resolve any gaps in the national action plan.