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Government of Pakistan  
Ministry of National Health Services, Regulations & Coordination  
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Islamabad, the 30<sup>th</sup> May, 2014

Subject: **Prevention and Control of Middle East Respiratory Syndrome (MERS) among Pakistani Visitors to Saudi Arabia and other Countries of Arabian Peninsula**

Identified first in September 2012 in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, the Middle East Respiratory Syndrome has till date affected a total of 658 individuals across the globe resulting in 204 deaths. The number of reported cases have however, risen markedly since April 2014 particularly Saudi Arabia and United Arab Emirates where healthcare-associated outbreaks are occurring. Moreover, during the same period, an additional seven countries (Philippines, Greece, Malaysia, Netherland, Egypt, USA and Iran) have notified imported MERS cases to the WHO.

2. In view of extensive movement of Pakistani citizens to Saudi Arabia and other Middle Eastern countries in connection with work and pilgrimage, proactive actions need to be initiated for the prevention and control of the deadly infection.

3. In the context of above, following actions are required to be taken in coordination with all health and non-health stakeholders;

- i. Launch of awareness and health education campaign among intending travelers to the Arabian Peninsula and other Middle Eastern countries; including Umrah and Hajj pilgrims focusing on:
  - a. Postponing visit by people with pre-existing medical conditions such as diabetes, chronic heart or lung disease, immunodeficiency disorders as well as pregnant ladies.
  - b. Promoting frequent hand washing and observing respiratory etiquettes
  - c. Avoiding crowded places to the possible extent and using mask during Umrah and Hajj
  - d. Avoiding unnecessary contact with farm, domestic, and wild animals, especially camels
  - e. Avoiding of contact with patients with respiratory symptoms
  - f. Seeking early medical attention in case of acute and rapidly worsening respiratory symptoms
- ii. Advising returning pilgrims / umrah attendees to seek immediate medical attention if they develop acute respiratory illness with fever and cough within two weeks after their return.

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