## Amendment to International Health Regulations (2005), Annex 7 (yellow fever):

### Term of protection provided by vaccination against yellow fever infection, and validity of related IHR certificate of vaccination, extended to life of the person vaccinated

Yellow fever is the only disease specified in the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR (2005)) for which countries may require proof of vaccination from travellers as a condition of entry under certain circumstances and may take certain measures if an arriving traveller is not in possession of such a certificate.[1]

In May 2014, based on the recommendation from WHO's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization that a single dose of yellow fever vaccine confers life-long protection,[2] the Sixty-seventh World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHA67.13 (2014) to update and amend Annex 7 of the Regulations.[3]

**The amendment to Annex 7 of IHR (2005) (see below) enters into force and will be legally binding upon all IHR States Parties on 11 July 2016**.

In the context of international travel, **the amendment to Annex 7 changes the period of validity of the related international certificate of vaccination against yellow fever, and the protection provided by vaccination against yellow fever infection under the IHR (2005), from ten (10) years to the life of the person (traveller) vaccinated. Accordingly, as of 11 July 2016, for both existing or new certificates, revaccination or a booster dose of yellow fever vaccine cannot be required of international travellers as a condition of entry into a State Party, regardless of the date their international certificate of vaccination was initially issued.**

This lifetime validity of these certificates applies automatically to certificates issued after 11 July 2016, as well as certificates already issued.

---

[1] The main IHR (2005) provisions on vaccination and related certificates are Annexes 6 and 7 and Article 36. See the WHO International Health Regulations (2005), Second edition, 2008. Available at: http://www.who.int/ihr/publications/9789241596664/en/

[2] *Meeting of the Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on immunization, April 2013 – conclusions and recommendations. Weekly epidemiological record. 2013;88(20):201–216 (http://www.who.int/wer/2013/wer8820.pdf, accessed 18 March 2014).*

[3] Resolution WHA67.13.

## Key revised text in Annex 7

The following partial text of Annex 7 includes the new revised text (in **bold**).

> ***REQUIREMENTS CONCERNING VACCINATION OR PROPHYLAXIS FOR SPECIFIC DISEASES***
>
> *1. In addition to any recommendation concerning vaccination or prophylaxis, the following diseases are those specifically designated under these Regulations for which proof of vaccination or prophylaxis may be required for travellers as a condition of entry to a State Party:*
>
> *Vaccination against yellow fever.*
>
> *2. Recommendations and requirements for vaccination against yellow fever:*
>
> > *(a) For the purpose of this Annex:*
> >
> > *(i) the incubation period of yellow fever is six days;*
> >
> > *(ii) yellow fever vaccines approved by WHO provide protection against infection starting 10 days following the administration of the vaccine;*
> >
> > *(iii) this* ***protection continues for the life of the person vaccinated****; and*
> >
> > *(iv) the validity of a certificate of vaccination against yellow fever shall* ***extend for the life of the person vaccinated****, beginning 10 days after the date of vaccination.*

All persons involved in implementing the new requirements should review the full text of Annex 7. (See full text attached at end of the document.)

## Questions and answers on specific issues:

1. ***Do travellers need to obtain new IHR certificates of vaccination against yellow fever?***
   **No.** Currently valid IHR international certificates of vaccination continue to be valid – now for the life of the traveller indicated.

   The IHR (2005), in Annexes 6 and 7, provide specific requirements for both the content and format of the certificates of vaccination against yellow fever. The required format for these certificates includes a space to enter an expiry date where applicable. (See below) Based upon the prior ten-year IHR requirement for validity, existing certificates usually include a date ten years after prior vaccination. Due to the

amendment to Annex 7, regardless of any such dates of vaccination or of validity on existing certificates, they are now automatically valid for life.

| Vaccine or prophylaxis | Date | Signature and professional status of supervising clinician | Manufacturer and batch No. of vaccine or prophylaxis | Certificate valid from ..... until ..... | Official stamp of administering centre |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | | | | | |
| 2. | | | | | |

2. **Do existing certificates of vaccination need to be changed or modified to show they are valid for life?**
**No.** Nothing need or should be modified in the certificate; indeed under the IHR any changes, deletions, erasures or additions may cause a certificate to be rendered invalid. (See IHR, Annex 6(6).)

3. **On new certificates, what term should be entered in the space on the certificate (see above) indicating the period of validity?**

While the IHR do not specify the exact words to include on the certificate to indicate lifetime validity of the certificate, WHO encourages countries to use words which clearly and unambiguously indicate that the validity of the certificate is for life of the person vaccinated. In this context, in order to avoid potential confusion and interruption of international travel, WHO suggests using the same terminology in the certificate as adopted in the revised text of Annex 7 which clearly states that the certificates are valid for life. In accordance with the IHR requirement that these certificates be completed in English or French (and may also be completed in another language in addition to English or French), please note that the terminology used in the revised Annex 7 is as follows:

English: *"life of person vaccinated"*
French: *"vie entière du sujet vacciné"*

4. **Does this amendment to the IHR (2005) affect what measures States Parties can implement for the protection of their own populations or what doctors may advise their patients concerning vaccination against yellow fever, including potential boosters?**

**No.** The amendment only affects what countries may require of international travellers as a condition of entry in terms of vaccination against yellow fever and related IHR international certificates of vaccination. Countries and health care

providers continue to be free to make requirements on vaccination, revaccination or boosters for their own populations, or patients, respectively.[4]

5. **What steps should States Parties take to prepare for implementation of the new certificate requirements on 11 July 2016 when they become legally required?**
   - Inform all relevant authorities, offices and personnel
   - Train personnel responsible for review, processing and acceptance of international certificates of vaccination against yellow fever to ensure they can carry out their functions fully on that date
   - Review and update as necessary all laws, regulations, operating rules or procedures or other requirements concerning review, processing and acceptance of international certificates of vaccination against yellow fever to ensure they are consistent with the new requirements.

The full texts of Annex 7, as amended and in force for all WHO Member States as of 11 July 2016, in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish are available at www.who.int/ith.

[4] *See Vaccines and vaccination against yellow fever: WHO Position Paper – June 2013, Weekly Epidemiological Record*, 88(27):269-284 (*http://www.who.int/wer/2013/wer8827.pdf?ua=1, accessed 14 April 2016)*.