

GLOBALISATION: GLOBAL ALERT

5.1 Globalisation has brought the world much closer together than it has ever been. Unfortunately, the efficient transport of people and goods all over the world today has also facilitated the transport of communicable diseases. In short, local health is global health and global health is local health.

5.2 During the SARS epidemic, Hong Kong's health system represented an important line of defence against the outbreak of this new and emerging infectious disease. The outbreak at *Hotel M* is a clear illustration of how a cluster of hotel guests and visitors triggered off chains of infection, including the outbreak at Prince of Wales Hospital in Hong Kong and outbreaks in Hanoi, Singapore and Toronto. The epidemic serves as a wake-up call for the world – that there is an urgent need for heightened awareness and alertness, and that the world must learn from the SARS experience to prepare for other emerging diseases.

NEED FOR PREPAREDNESS

5.3 The most important lesson from the SARS experience is that we must be *prepared* for new and emerging infectious diseases. The fact that the review has indicated significant shortcomings of system performance, particularly in the early phase of the epidemic, is hardly surprising. Indeed it would appear

that the same was true of other jurisdictions which had to face the problem. Through retrospective analysis, the Committee has identified things that could have been done better, and areas in which further improvement should be made. It is essential that a proper system with the necessary capacity be designed and put in place during ordinary times, so that the system will be ready should an emergency or crisis strike.

5.4 In looking into how the epidemic was handled and how best to prepare for the future, the Committee has grouped its findings and ideas into a number of common themes. These are discussed in detail in the following chapters –

Chapter 6	Organisation of Health and Healthcare System for the Control of an Outbreak of Communicable Disease
Chapter 7	Health Protection Functions
Chapter 8	Coordination within Hong Kong
Chapter 9	Collaboration within Pearl River Delta Region and with International Community
Chapter 10	Surveillance, Information and Data Management
Chapter 11	Surge Capacity
Chapter 12	Clinical Management, Hospital Infection Control and Occupational Health

- Chapter 13 Research and Training
- Chapter 14 Communications
- Chapter 15 Engaging the Community
- Chapter 16 The Impact and After-effects of SARS on the Community