



# World Health Organization

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His Excellency  
Mr Pedro Sánchez Pérez-Castejón  
Presidente del Gobierno de España  
Palacio de la Moncloa  
Madrid  
Espagne

5 May 2026

Your Excellency,

I have the honour to express my sincere gratitude for the steadfast collaboration and unwavering commitment you have demonstrated in support of the World Health Organization (WHO) and our shared public health goals. In relation to the hantavirus outbreak associated with the MV Hondius cruise ship, I am writing to urgently seek your Government's continued collaboration and support to facilitate the arrival of the MV Hondius in Spain, allow for the disembarking of passengers, and the application of public health measures using risk-based approach.

WHO has been supporting Cabo Verde and coordinating the international response. The Government of Cabo Verde has indicated that it does not have the capacity to carry out public health assessment, epidemiological and environmental investigations, and implementation of public health response measures. For the above reason, under Articles 27 and 28 of the International Health Regulations (IHR 2005), Cabo Verde can allow the affected conveyance to proceed at its own risk to the nearest port with adequate response capacities, while informing the public health authorities (i.e., Spain) with the port that has adequate response capacities of the arriving affected conveyance. As per Article 44, States Parties shall collaborate with each other, inter alia, in response to public health events.

Further, it is the humanitarian imperative that we collectively work to avoid unnecessary restrictions that do not have a public health justification, including in relation to the movement of people – the passengers and crew of the MV Hondius must be allowed to disembark as soon as practicable, in order to reduce any further psychological toll, and appropriate medical management of non-hantavirus medical issues of the passengers and crew, many of whom are elderly.

Benefits of disembarking travelers as early as possible will reduce the risk of any further contacts developing illness onboard, where it is difficult to manage and diagnose; allows for earlier thorough disinfection of the ship; and limits the time at sea for any passengers who may develop symptoms shortly after leaving Cabo Verde, reducing the likelihood that they develop severe illness.

WHO seeks your Government's full engagement and application of the IHR in response to this event. In support of this effort, WHO continues to engage closely with health authorities in Spain to provide guidance on the appropriate public health measures and remains on standby to provide direct technical support upon the arrival of the MV Hondius.

Please accept, Your Excellency, the assurance of my highest consideration.

*with much gratitude*

Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus  
Director-General