

World reacts in horror to Trump withdrawing WHO funds



United Nations, April 15 (RHC)-- Leaders of governments and organizations around the world are calling Donald Trump's decision to cut all funding to the World Health Organization a dangerous step in the wrong direction at a time of a pandemic health crisis.

The United States is the biggest overall donor to the Geneva-based WHO, contributing more than \$400 million in 2019, roughly 15 percent of its budget.

Reaction to Trump's move was fast and furious worldwide. The Director General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said: "There is no time to waste. The WHO's singular focus is on working to serve all people to save lives and stop the COVID-19 pandemic."

United Nations Secretary-General Antonio Guterres stated that this is not the time to reduce resources for WHO operations. "Now is the time for unity and for the international community to work together in solidarity to stop this virus and its shattering consequences."

From the Johns Hopkins Center for Health Security, Dr. Amesh Adalja, an infectious disease expert and senior scholar at the center, said: "The move sends the wrong message during the middle of a pandemic." Adalja said the WHO does make mistakes, as it did in delaying the response to the Ebola outbreak in 2013 and 2014 in West Africa. He said reforms might be needed, but that work needs to take

place after the pandemic has passed. "It's not the middle of a pandemic that you do this type of thing."

Adalja said the WHO collects information about where the virus is active in every county in the world, which the United States needs to help guide decisions about when to open borders.

Microsoft co-founder Bill Gates said the White House should not withhold funding from the World Health Organization during a global pandemic, hours after President Donald Trump announced his intention to do so.

On Twitter early Wednesday morning, Gates said: "Halting funding for the World Health Organization during a world health crisis is as dangerous as it sounds. Their work is slowing the spread of COVID-19 and if that work is stopped no other organization can replace them. The world needs WHO now more than ever."

The American Medical Association President Patrice Harris called it "a dangerous step in the wrong direction that will not make defeating COVID-19 easier" and urged Trump to reconsider.

"This is nothing more than a transparent attempt by President Trump to distract from his history downplaying the severity of the coronavirus crisis and his administration's failure to prepare our nation," said Chair Leslie Dach, who served as the global Ebola coordinator for the US Department of Health and Human Services.

"To be sure, the World Health Organization is not without fault but it is beyond irresponsible to cut its funding at the height of a global pandemic. This move will undoubtedly make Americans less safe."

And the African Union head Moussa Faki Mahamat called the decision "deeply regrettable" and said the world had a "collective responsibility" to help WHO during the COVID-19 pandemic.

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