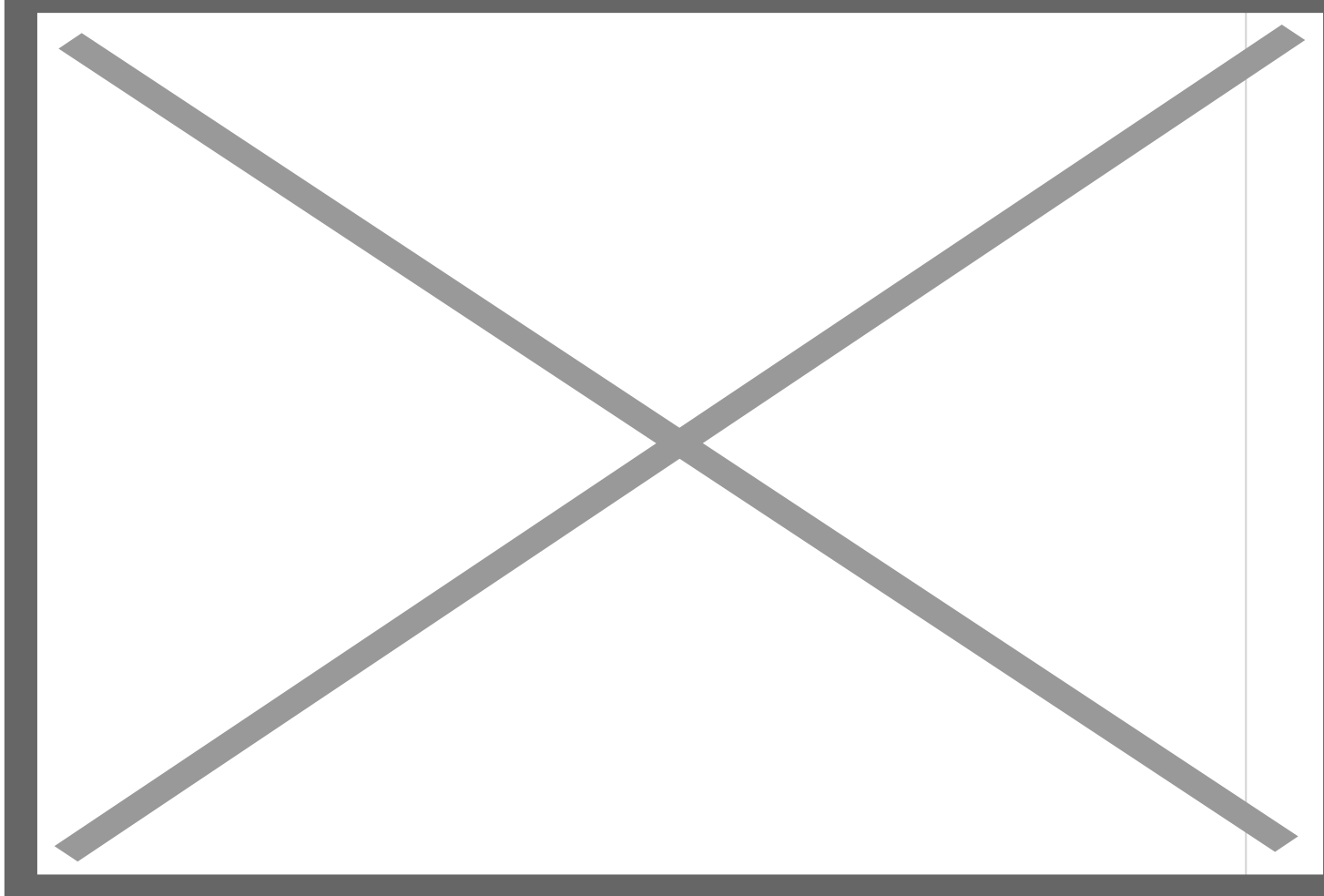


WHO chief says global health funding faces worst crisis in memory

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Director General of the World Health Organization Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus says the global health agency will be making "very painful" budget cuts [File: Salvatore Di Nolfi/EPA-EFE]

Geneva, May 2 (RHC)-- The head of the World Health Organization (WHO) has warned that global health is at serious risk as donor support dries up and severe budget cuts loom.

WHO Director General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Thursday that the agency is facing “the greatest disruption to global health financing in memory” as contributions fall sharply across the board.

The crisis deepened after the United States, formerly the organisation’s biggest funder, pulled out in January, saying the health agency had mishandled the COVID-19 pandemic and other international health crises. The U.S. had previously covered nearly a fifth of the WHO’s budget.

In response, the WHO has revised its financial plans, scaling back its current spending and proposing a 21 percent cut for the 2026-2027 budget cycle.

An internal memo seen by the news agency Reuters outlines a reduction from \$5.3bn to \$4.2 billion as well as significant staff cuts.

The WHO plans to make cuts across all levels of its operations, including its headquarters in Geneva and regional and country offices. Some offices in wealthier nations may be closed entirely.

Assistant Director General for Business Operations Raul Thomas said about 25 percent of the WHO’s salary budget remains unfunded over the next two years, adding that it’s too early to say how many roles will be lost because that would depend on staffing levels and locations.

While the U.S. exit added pressure, Tedros pointed to deeper structural problems. The WHO currently relies on a handful of countries for 80 percent of its budget through voluntary contributions. He said the agency must diversify its funding sources to survive long term.

Tedros told reporters he remains in contact with US officials and continues to provide them with information although he has had no direct communication with President Donald Trump.

With a shortfall of nearly \$600 million this year alone, WHO officials are urging donors to act swiftly. Without renewed support, they warned, the ability to respond to international health emergencies and sustain basic services could collapse.

[SOURCE: EFE and NEWS AGENCIES]

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