PRESS RELEASE

THE US’ WITHDRAWAL FROM THE WHO WILL INCREASE DEATH RATES AND THREATENS GLOBAL SECURITY

President Trump’s decision to withdraw the US and its financial support from the World Health Organization is grossly irresponsible at any time but particularly so during a pandemic. Dr. Michele Barry, Chair of the Consortium of Universities for Global Health (CUGH) said, “We need nations to work together to beat this virus and other emerging health threats to the world. The WHO is the one entity whose main mission is to enable a global vision and issue guidelines and workable frameworks geared towards health equity for the world. It is our wake-up sentinel alarm to health threats.”

CUGH’s Executive Director Dr. Keith Martin said, “The WHO works to improve health outcomes worldwide but particularly for the world’s most vulnerable people across: health emergencies, a broad range of infectious diseases, cancer, cardiovascular disease, diabetes, mental health, climate change, environmental threats and more. This decision will increase death and disability rates around the world particularly amongst the world’s poor” He added, “these cuts pose an existential threat to the health and economic well-being of every country including the United States.”

Further, Dr. Patricia Davidson, Dean of the Johns Hopkins School of Nursing added “this is the time for global solidarity and cohesion not distrust, skepticism and division. COVID-19 is a clear signal of the need for coordinated and integrated approaches. We should be refining and enhancing business processes and networks- not dismantling them.”

COVID-19 has killed over 130,000 individuals in the US and more than 530,000 people worldwide. The WHO is the one international agency mandated to mobilize the international community to address global health threats. Now is the time to support the WHO, not undermine it. The US contributes between $107 to $119 million in assessed contributions plus an additional $102-$401 million per year. The WHO’s budget is $2.4 billion per year which is about that of a large US hospital. Rather than terminating its relationship with the WHO, the US should increase its support. This is needed to strengthen what it is already doing to coordinate public health responses across regions, mitigate risks, improve country preparedness, and accelerate research and development to address many challenges. “Diseases know no borders and eliminating the US’ relationship with the WHO will severely compromise its capacity to address the current pandemic as well as the many other public health challenges the world faces,” said Dr. Martin.

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