PRESS RELEASE

DEFUNDING THE WHO: AN ASSAULT ON THE WORLD’S POOR

President Trump’s efforts to expedite defunding the World Health Organization’s operations should be of great concern to all US lawmakers and the American public regardless of their political stripe.

Diseases do not recognize borders or a person’s politics. They are equal opportunity threats that kill and maim whoever is vulnerable or unlucky enough to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. Although anyone can be affected by a disease, as we are seeing with the Covid-19 pandemic, the poor are most vulnerable. They often do not have the reserves to prevent an illness or live in circumstances that make them vulnerable to ill health (being exposed to pollution, malnutrition, a lack of access to sanitation, clean water or accessible, effective health systems). Through an act of fate, any one of us could have been born into those situations.

WHO is the only global public health organization mandated to address global health threats. It was created by the international community, including the United States, precisely because every country needs an organization able to transcend domestic interests to deal with threats that are truly transnational. No individual country can or would be willing do this. Despite being grossly underfunded the WHO has been immensely successful and works tirelessly to address not only pandemic threats like Covid-19 but a long list of other global health challenges including TB, malaria, HIV, heart disease, diabetes, cancer, poor nutrition, accident prevention, strengthening health systems and much more.

Dr. Patricia Davidson, Dean of the School of Nursing at Johns Hopkins University said, “The United States has long been a leader and convener on the world stage and an integral part of the World Health Organization. Severing our ties will not only jeopardize the health of millions of people around the world but also in the United States.”

Dr. Keith Martin, Executive Director of the Washington DC based Consortium of Universities for Global Health said, “Every US congressperson must ask themselves if removing funding from the WHO, which will increase deaths and disability amongst the world’s poor, is consistent with their personal moral compass, religious beliefs and values. If it isn’t, they must honor the financial commitments the US has made and fund the WHO. Anything less poses a clear and present danger to the safety and security of all nations including the US.”

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