Press release

17 April 2020

The World Federation of Public Health Associations (WFPHA) deplores the decision by President Trump to suspend funding by the United States of America (USA) to the World Health Organization (WHO) pending the review by his government’s administration of the manner in which WHO dealt with the COVID-19 situation. The WFPHA, founded in 1967, is the unique international non-governmental body representing the interests of the global public health community through national and regional public health associations and associated organizations.

The WFPHA urges the Government of the USA to reconsider President Trump’s decision and to restore full funding to the WHO.

“This decision is truly regrettable” stated Professor Laetitia Rispel, WFPHA’s President. “We’re dealing with an unprecedented global public health emergency that requires cooperation and collaboration by all UN Member States and observer jurisdictions to ensure effective viral transmission prevention and control, the treatment of people who are infected, and to deal with the serious economic and social ramifications of this pandemic.”

Under the terms of the International Health Regulations, Member States are obliged to report public health events to the WHO if they meet at least two of the following criteria: (1) the seriousness of the event’s public health impact; (2) the unusual or unexpected nature of the event; (3) the risk of international disease spread; and (4) the risk that travel or trade restrictions will be imposed by other countries. Should the Member States fail to share valid and accurate information on a timely basis with the WHO, the organization is unable to meet its global obligation to warn countries of an emerging public health emergency. Existing evidence suggests that the WHO has responded with urgency, once the SARS-CoV-2 was brought to its attention.

“Now is not the time to point fingers and allocate blame” according to Professor Bettina Borisch, the Federation’s Executive Director. “The World Health Organization plays a very important role in collaboration with governments and organizations around the world to control the spread of COVID-19 in an equitable manner to benefit all of the world’s people. The WHO has and continues to provide essential technical services and supplies in support of global efforts to contain the pandemic.”

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