

Press release – COVID-19: Both WHO and Europe must learn from the current pandemic, say MEPs



Today the Committee for Environment, Public Health and Food Safety held a debate with the Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO), Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, on the fight against COVID-19 and the global response to it, including WHO actions to prevent the spread of the disease and to develop treatments and vaccines.

Dr. Adhanom Ghebreyesus said the pandemic has highlighted the importance of global solidarity and that health should not be seen as a cost but an investment. He added that all countries in the world must strengthen primary health care and crisis preparedness and stressed the need for EU leadership globally.

While the Director-General said the situation in the EU has improved significantly, he underlined that COVID-19 is very much still circulating globally, with more than four million new cases in the last month.

The importance of vaccines

Many MEPs said that the global community must cooperate including in developing, manufacturing and distributing vaccines against COVID-19 and asked when a safe vaccine could be available.

Dr. Adhanom Ghebreyesus very much welcomed the Global Coronavirus Response pledging campaign launched by the EU, which has so far raised €9.8 billion, but said more is needed. He said scientists predict we may have a vaccine within one year or even a few months earlier. However, making the vaccine available and distributing it to all will be a challenge and requires political will. One option would be to give the vaccine only to those that

are most vulnerable to the virus.

Global cooperation and the WHO

Several MEPs underlined the importance of the WHO but also said it has made mistakes in its response to the pandemic. The Director-General admitted everyone makes mistakes and informed MEPs that an independent panel will evaluate the WHO response to the pandemic to learn from any mistakes made. It will start its work soon.

Dr Hans Kluge, Regional Director of WHO Europe, added that the three most important lessons learned in Europe from the pandemic are:

1. A stockpile of medical equipment, such as ventilators and masks, is needed;
2. Common indicators for monitoring a pandemic are necessary;
3. Solidarity is key, as no one is safe from a pandemic until everyone is safe.

Watch the full recording of the debate [here](#).

Background

WHO declared the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic on 12 March 2020. Based on the data received by WHO from national authorities, there have been 9 236 128 confirmed cases at global level and 477 634 deaths to date. You can see an updated dashboard [here](#).