

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE – STATEMENT FROM THE AMERICAN SOCIETY OF TROPICAL
MEDICINE AND HYGIENE**

Trump Administration Announcement to Halt World Health Organization Funding is Reckless and Counterproductive

Amid Unprecedented Global Health Crisis, Funding WHO Has Never Been More Critical

Arlington, Va. (April 16, 2020) – In the midst of a global pandemic, withholding U.S. funding from the World Health Organization is reckless, harmful and counterproductive. A step like this only encumbers the global response against COVID-19 instead of bolstering it. It makes no sense from an economic, social or health perspective.

The WHO serves as the frontline support system for all countries—including the United States. Working together is the smartest, most efficient and cost-effective way to confront this unprecedented, spreading global health crisis. No other organization can play the role of WHO or its central diplomatic role or perform the service they do across borders and cultures.

We urge the Trump Administration to resume U.S. funding to the WHO and work together with all of the other WHO Member States to provide appropriate oversight to the organization’s response efforts. The WHO has made mistakes, as do all organizations. And yes, all member countries should pay their fair share and work to improve the system. There will be lessons on how to better manage responses and opportunities to instill reforms, but after the disaster, rather than in the middle of it. Our focus must be on pushing forward and working together to accelerate the global response.

For the two-year cycle of 2018 and 2019, U.S. contributions accounted for about 20% of WHO’s total budget. Some of the wide-reaching consequences that could occur from cuts in U.S. funding are:

- Cancelling the shipment of masks, gowns and gloves to healthcare workers caring for COVID-19 patients around the world.
- Decreasing or terminating COVID-19 testing in sub-Saharan Africa.
- Ending testing for Ebola virus disease in the ongoing outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, and an interruption to tracing the contacts of infected people in efforts to contain the disease.

With COVID-19 spreading throughout every country, the WHO and its member states are providing critical data and guidance on the activity of the virus. The WHO has provided vital supplies to healthcare workers in dozens of countries to help reduce the transmission of COVID-19 around the globe. Beyond COVID-19, WHO is doing vital work worldwide in the fight against other infectious diseases like malaria, measles, tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS and polio.

A U.S. investment in global health is the best way to prepare and lead through a global pandemic. It is why the United States spearheaded the creation of the World Health Organization. COVID-19 is a real-life demonstration that a virus can jump time zones and ZIP codes with ease. Wouldn’t we help put out a fire in our neighbor’s house to protect our own? Let’s put out the fire and continue to fund WHO. All of our lives depend on it.

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About the American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene

The American Society of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene, founded in 1903, is the largest international scientific organization of experts dedicated to reducing the worldwide burden of tropical infectious diseases and improving global health. It accomplishes this through generating and sharing scientific evidence, informing health policies and practices, fostering career development, recognizing excellence, and advocating for investment in tropical medicine/global health research. For more information, visit astmh.org.