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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

March 26, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

I write to you to urge continued and further support of regional and multilateral health organizations as the world unites to confront the COVID-19 pandemic. The Pandemic presents an unprecedented challenge, one that can only be effectively addressed through collective action. At a time of great uncertainty for our nation and the world, it is therefore essential that the U.S. Government marshal an international response to more effectively combat the COVID-19 pandemic. Just as we seek to expand access to medical testing and health services for people in the United States, we must also accelerate our efforts to join governments around the world in sharing information and best practices on how to effectively address the current pandemic. Doing so will save countless lives and will have a direct impact on the United States' ability to defend against re-introduction of the virus once the epidemic is brought under control in the U.S.

With more than 70 years of experience strengthening health systems and responding to health emergencies, the World Health Organization (WHO) is playing an essential, life-saving role in addressing the COVID-19 outbreak. Around the world, WHO experts are collaborating with scientists, doctors, and medical personnel to share technical guidance on every aspect of the crisis—from emergency preparedness to clinical care. The agency is also providing life-saving personal protective equipment and supplying COVID-19 diagnostic and case management kits.

Given the WHO's indispensable role, it is imperative that the United States increase contributions toward the agency's COVID-19 response fund to support its Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. WHO's appeal of \$675 million remains only 28 percent funded as of March 23.¹ I strongly support the United States' \$14.7 million contribution to date and ask that you significantly increase funding for WHO's appeal. I also urge you to reach out to other donor governments to encourage robust burden-sharing. At a moment when the WHO is urgently trying to raise new resources to address COVID-19, I must also express concern that the United States is more than \$41 million in arrears to the organization from 2019.² If the Trump Administration fails to provide robust support to WHO's COVID-19 response and does not pay U.S. assessed contributions in full and on time, it will hamper the international efforts to fight this pandemic and, in turn, will affect the lives of our citizens.

¹ <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/donors-and-partners/funding>

² https://www.who.int/about/finances-accountability/funding/AC_Status_Report_2020.pdf?ua=1

Closer to home, with COVID-19 spreading throughout Latin America and the Caribbean, the role of the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) - as WHO's regional office for the Americas - is vital, especially in developing countries with limited hospital capacity and weak public health systems. PAHO is deploying teams to Venezuela, Bolivia, Paraguay, Guyana, Nicaragua, Honduras, Guatemala, Haiti, and some Caribbean island states to support national response plans. PAHO has supplied COVID-19 diagnostic kits, personal protective equipment, respirators, and other essential medical supplies to ministries of health in Belize, Barbados, El Salvador, and other countries in the region.

Given PAHO's critical role in addressing COVID-19, it is deeply concerning that the United States is more than \$60 million in arrears to the organization from fiscal year 2019.³ The Administration's failure to pay its past dues directly undermines PAHO's operations, and its efforts to assist countries during this grave crisis and prevent future health emergencies. These impacts will no doubt come back to adversely impact Americans' health and safety.

For over three years, the Trump Administration has refused to invest in the international programs and organizations that make our citizens safer. Threats like COVID-19 do not respect borders and the best public health practices tell us that investing in strong healthcare systems abroad pays dividends for the health and well-being of Americans here at home.

The COVID-19 pandemic has shown us that the United States cannot isolate itself from the world. We must help lead a coordinated global response to address this crisis. To assert leadership, the United States must immediately increase contributions toward WHO's COVID-19 response and pay its arrears to WHO and PAHO. I sincerely hope you will take swift actions to show leadership in utilizing these health organizations to promote and protect the health and wellbeing of all Americans.

Sincerely,



Robert Menendez
Ranking Member

³https://www.paho.org/hq/index.php?option=com_docman&view=download&category_slug=legislation-and-policies&alias=8-paho-quotas-8&Itemid=270&lang=en