

United States of America
WHA73 Plenary Statement

As delivered by

Alex M. Azar, II

U.S. Secretary Of Health and Human Services

Director-General Tedros, fellow ministers, COVID-19 has tragically taken hundreds of thousands of lives, impacted millions of people, and done deep damage to the world economy.

We must be frank about one of the primary reasons this outbreak spun out of control: There was a failure by this organization to obtain the information that the world needed, and that failure cost many lives.

The United States welcomes the assistance provided by our friends during this crisis, and we have been proud to allocate over \$9 billion that will benefit the global COVID-19 response, including more than half a billion dollars in planned investments by my ministry to support more than 40 of the most at-risk countries.

The United States launched the world's first human vaccine trial and reported the first positive results from a therapeutic clinical trial. These successes and the transparent way in which we share them will benefit the whole world.

WHO's operations must be transparent too, and we support an independent review of every aspect of WHO's response to the pandemic. We all must come together to ensure that WHO fulfills its key mandate, and that member states comply with the International Health Regulations.

In an apparent attempt to conceal this outbreak, at least one member state made a mockery of their transparency obligations, with tremendous costs for the entire world. We saw that WHO failed at its core mission of information sharing and transparency when member states do not act in good faith. This cannot ever happen again. The status quo is intolerable. WHO must change, and it must become far more transparent and far more accountable

It is also critical that Taiwan participate as an observer at the WHA, to bring the helpful perspective regarding their effective and exemplary response. WHO barred Taiwan from participation in 2016 just a few months after Taiwan's free and fair elections. The health of 23 million Taiwanese people should never be sacrificed to send a political message.

Although we are all focused on the immediate response, we need a more effective WHO right now to help win this fight and demonstrate to our citizens that we are working to prevent such catastrophes in the future.

The United States sends our best wishes and open offer of cooperation to each of you in our shared efforts to defeat this pandemic and protect the health of each nation around the world.