

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND REFORM

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WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5051  
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<http://oversight.house.gov>

April 9, 2020

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus  
Director-General  
World Health Organization  
20 Avenue Appia  
CH-1211 Geneva 27  
Switzerland

Dear Dr. Tedros:

This letter is in furtherance of the Committee on Oversight and Reform's (the Committee) ongoing investigation into the Chinese government's role in exacerbating the COVID-19 pandemic, including its large-scale propaganda campaign.<sup>1</sup> The World Health Organization (WHO) is at the center of the global response to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.<sup>2</sup> Despite the WHO's purported mission to operate as an apolitical international institution within the United Nations, recent media reports suggest that the WHO helped Beijing disseminate propaganda, downplayed the extent of the disease, and possibly delayed ordering a public health emergency.<sup>3</sup> Given the actions and statements of WHO officials during the past few months, we are concerned that the WHO is no longer serving the needs of the world and is instead taking its cues from China.

Throughout the crisis, the WHO has shied away from placing any blame on the Chinese government, which is in essence the Communist Party of China. You, as leader of the WHO, even went so far as to praise the Chinese government's "transparency" during the crisis, when, in fact, the regime has consistently lied to the world by underreporting their actual infection and death statistics.<sup>4</sup> During the crisis, the WHO has repeatedly relied on false information from the Chinese government. Following are several examples:

<sup>1</sup> Letter from Jody B. Hice, et. al., Ranking Member, H. Comm. On Oversight & Reform, Subcomm. On Government Operations, to Michael R. Pompeo, Secretary, U.S. Dep't of State (Apr. 2, 2020).

<sup>2</sup> See generally WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, *Rolling updates on coronavirus disease (COVID-19)* (Apr. 7, 2020), <https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/events-as-they-happen>.

<sup>3</sup> THE EDITORIAL BOARD, *World Health Coronavirus Disinformation*, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (Apr. 5, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/articles/world-health-coronavirus-disinformation-11586122093>; Sarah Boseley, *China's handling of coronavirus is a diplomatic challenge for WHO*, THE GUARDIAN (Feb. 18, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/feb/18/china-coronavirus-who-diplomatic-challenge>.

<sup>4</sup> THE EDITORIAL BOARD *supra* note 3; Nick Wadhams & Jennifer Jacobs, *China Concealed Extent of Virus Outbreak, U.S. Intelligence Says*, BLOOMBERG (Apr. 1, 2020), <https://www.bloomberg.com/news/articles/2020-04-01/china-concealed-extent-of-virus-outbreak-u-s-intelligence-says>.

- 1. Denied human-to-human spread of COVID-19 based solely on Chinese propaganda:** On January 14, 2020, the WHO tweeted that “[p]reliminary investigations conducted by Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the novel coronavirus.”<sup>5</sup> These preliminary investigations included China jailing any doctor that disseminated any information about COVID-19 not first cleared through state-run media.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, the WHO ignored Taiwanese warnings of human-to-human transmission in December 2019, because Taiwan is not currently recognized by the WHO as an independent nation.<sup>7</sup> United States intelligence sources have since discovered that China covered-up and lied about the extent of the outbreak.<sup>8</sup> On January 23, 2020, the WHO finally recognized that human-to-human spread was occurring, a month later than the first warnings.<sup>9</sup>
- 2. Prolonged naming COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) and pandemic because China had the spread under control:** By the time the WHO declared COVID-19 a PHEIC on January 30, 2020, the disease had infected almost 10,000 and killed almost 1,000 people in 19 different countries.<sup>10</sup> It is reported that the delay in PHEIC declaration was a result of intense pressure from China.<sup>11</sup> While making the declaration, you said that “China is to be congratulated for the extraordinary measures it has taken to contain the outbreak.”<sup>12</sup> Since then, there have been over one million new cases and 80,000 deaths worldwide.<sup>13</sup>
- 3. Delayed serious measures, like travel restrictions, to counter the global spread:** Despite declaring COVID-19 a PHEIC and extensive evidence of transmission through travel, the WHO insisted other countries not restrict travel or trade to China.<sup>14</sup> On January

<sup>5</sup> World Health Organization (@WHO), Twitter (Jan. 14, 2020), [https://twitter.com/WHO/status/1217043229427761152?ref\\_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed&ref\\_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.foxnews.com%2Fworld%2Fworld-health-organization-january-tweet-china-human-transmission-coronavirus](https://twitter.com/WHO/status/1217043229427761152?ref_src=twsrc%5Etfw%7Ctwcamp%5Etweetembed&ref_url=https%3A%2F%2Fwww.foxnews.com%2Fworld%2Fworld-health-organization-january-tweet-china-human-transmission-coronavirus).

<sup>6</sup> Jim Geraghty, *Whom Does WHO Trust?*, NATIONAL REVIEW (Mar. 20, 2020), <https://www.nationalreview.com/corner/who-does-who-trust/>.

<sup>7</sup> Javier Hernandez, *Trump Slammed the W.H.O. Over Coronavirus. He’s Not Alone.*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Apr. 8, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/04/08/world/asia/trump-who-coronavirus-china.html?auth=login-email&login=email>.

<sup>8</sup> Wadhams *supra* note 4.

<sup>9</sup> Francois Godement, *Fighting the Coronavirus Pandemic: China’s Influence at the World Health Organization*, INSTITUT MONTAIGNE (Mar. 23, 2020), <https://www.institutmontaigne.org/en/blog/fighting-coronavirus-pandemic-chinas-influence-world-health-organization>.

<sup>10</sup> THE NEW YORK TIMES, *Deaths surpass 200, and State Department Urges Against Travel to China*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Jan. 30, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/30/world/asia/coronavirus-china.html#link-6a63a9b7>.

<sup>11</sup> Boseley *supra* note 3.

<sup>12</sup> Sarah Boseley, *WHO declares coronavirus a global health emergency*, THE GUARDIAN (Jan. 30, 2020), <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2020/jan/30/who-declares-coronavirus-a-global-health-emergency>.

<sup>13</sup> CORONAVIRUS RESOURCE CENTER, JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY & MEDICINE, <https://coronavirus.jhu.edu/map.html>.

<sup>14</sup> Yasufumi Saito, Andrew James, & Rosa de Acosta, *High-Speed Trains, International Flights: How the Coronavirus Spread*, THE WALL STREET JOURNAL (Mar. 5, 2020), <https://www.wsj.com/graphics/how-the-coronavirus-spread/>; Boseley *supra* note 11.

31, 2020, President Trump came under intense criticism when he barred travel from China. A certain politician called the order “xenophobi[c].”<sup>15</sup> In comparison to the WHO’s inaction, the President’s actions saved lives. Between December 31 – when cases were first reported – and January 31, over 430,000 people were on direct flights from China to the U.S.<sup>16</sup> The WHO has not issued updated travel restrictions since February 29 and has still not recommended restricting international travel.<sup>17</sup>

4. **Continued praise of the Chinese efforts to combat the crisis, despite the cover-up:**

The WHO has routinely praised China’s efforts to combat the spread of COVID-19 despite multiple reports that China engaged in a massive disinformation campaign.<sup>18</sup> According to a recent report from the U.S intelligence community, China severely underreported both its total number of cases of, and deaths caused by, COVID-19.<sup>19</sup> The report details efforts by the Chinese government to continually alter their reporting methodology which, at different points, left out individuals who tested positive but were asymptomatic—despite their ability to remain contagious.<sup>20</sup> China also gagged doctors and journalists that attempted to speak the truth about the severity of COVID-19.<sup>21</sup> You even said China should be “praised” for these manipulative tactics; tactics frowned upon worldwide.<sup>22</sup>

In 2017, the WHO received 17% of its total funding, or \$513 million, from the United States.<sup>23</sup> It is essential that American taxpayers’ money is allocated to organizations that uniformly serve the interests of nations across the globe, not merely the interests of China’s authoritarian, communist regime. To help us and the public understand the WHO’s efforts to combat the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and its relationship with the Chinese government, please provide the following documents and information:

1. All documents and communications regarding public health, including but not limited to COVID-19, novel coronavirus, or coronavirus, between the WHO and the Chinese Communist Party or the government of China between August 2019 and present.
2. All documents and communications regarding the total number of infected persons and deceased persons related to the current COVID-19 pandemic in China, including those infected but asymptomatic.

<sup>15</sup> Dan McLaughlin, *Trump Could Have Restricted Travel Further*, NATIONAL REVIEW (Apr. 7, 2020), <https://www.nationalreview.com/2020/04/coronavirus-response-travel-restrictions-trump-could-have-gone-further/>.

<sup>16</sup> Derrick Bryson Taylor, *A Timeline of the Coronavirus Pandemic*, THE NEW YORK TIMES (Apr. 7, 2020), <https://www.nytimes.com/article/coronavirus-timeline.html>; *Id.*

<sup>17</sup> WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION, *Updated WHO recommendations for international traffic in relation to COVID-19 outbreak*, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION (Feb. 29, 2020), <https://www.who.int/news-room/articles-detail/updated-who-recommendations-for-international-traffic-in-relation-to-covid-19-outbreak>.

<sup>18</sup> *WHO chief praises China’s virus fight, urges more from world*, ASSOCIATED PRESS (Feb. 15, 2020), <https://apnews.com/d305b8c6fcc5ac1f1a6e24382e6769fb>.

<sup>19</sup> Wadhams *supra* note 4.

<sup>20</sup> *Id.*

<sup>21</sup> Geraghty *supra* note 6.

<sup>22</sup> Boseley *supra* note 3.

<sup>23</sup> *The U.S. Government and the World Health Organization*, KFF (Jan. 24, 2019), <https://www.kff.org/global-health-policy/fact-sheet/the-u-s-government-and-the-world-health-organization/>.

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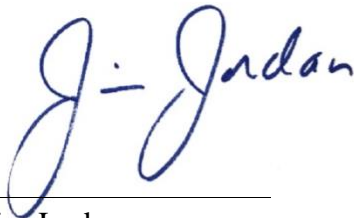
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3. All documents and communications regarding public health, including but not limited to COVID-19, novel coronavirus, or coronavirus, between the WHO and Taiwan between August 2019 and present.

In addition to these documents, please provide a staff-level briefing no later than April 16, 2020. This briefing may be conducted remotely for convenience and safety issues. To schedule the briefing or ask any follow-up or related questions, please contact Committee staff at (202) 225-5074.

The Committee on Oversight and Reform is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

Sincerely,



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Jim Jordan  
Ranking Member  
House Committee on  
Oversight and Reform



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Jody B. Hice  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on  
Government  
Operations



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James R. Comer  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on  
Environment



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Chip E. Roy  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on  
Civil Rights and Civil  
Liberties



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Glenn S. Grothman  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on  
National Security



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W. Greg Steube  
Member of Congress



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Ralph W. Norman  
Member of Congress



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Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S  
Member of Congress



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Fred B. Keller  
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Kelly M. Armstrong  
Member of Congress



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Carol D. Miller  
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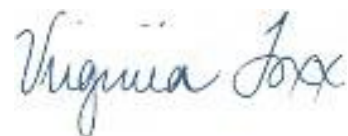
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Mark E. Green  
Member of Congress



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Thomas H. Massie  
Member of Congress



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Virginia A. Foxx  
Member of Congress

Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

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cc: The Honorable Carolyn B. Maloney, Chairwoman  
Committee on Oversight and Reform

The Honorable Gerald E. Connolly, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Government Operations

The Honorable Jamie B. Raskin, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Civil Rights and Civil Liberties

The Honorable Stephen F. Lynch, Chairman  
Subcommittee on National Security

The Honorable Raja Krishnamoorthi, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Economic and Consumer Policy

The Honorable Harley E. Rouda, Chairman  
Subcommittee on Environment