

WHO declares COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, urges countries to take action now to stop the disease



The World Health Organization, the WHO, has now officially declared the coronavirus COVID19 outbreak a pandemic.

"This is the first pandemic caused by coronavirus," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said at a briefing in Geneva.

Even as he raised the health emergency to its highest level, Tedros said hope remains that COVID-19 can be curtailed. And he urged countries to take action now to stop the disease.

"WHO has been in full response mode since we were notified of the first cases," Tedros said. "And we have called every day for countries to take urgent and aggressive action. We have rung the alarm bell loud and clear."

WHO director-general Dr. Tedros Adhanom has said that coupled with the alarming levels of spread and severity are the alarming levels of inaction by world leaders in response to the outbreak.

The WHO chief stressed however, that describing the current outbreak as a pandemic does not mean that countries should give up.

"Describing the situation as a pandemic does not change WHO's assessment of the threat posed by the virus," Tedros said. "It doesn't change what WHO is doing. And it doesn't change what countries should do."

He insisted that this is a controllable pandemic, and advised that countries that decide to give up on fundamental public health measures may end up with a larger problem, and a heavier burden on their health systems that could require even more severe measures to control.

"People, we're in this together – to do the right things with calm and protect

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