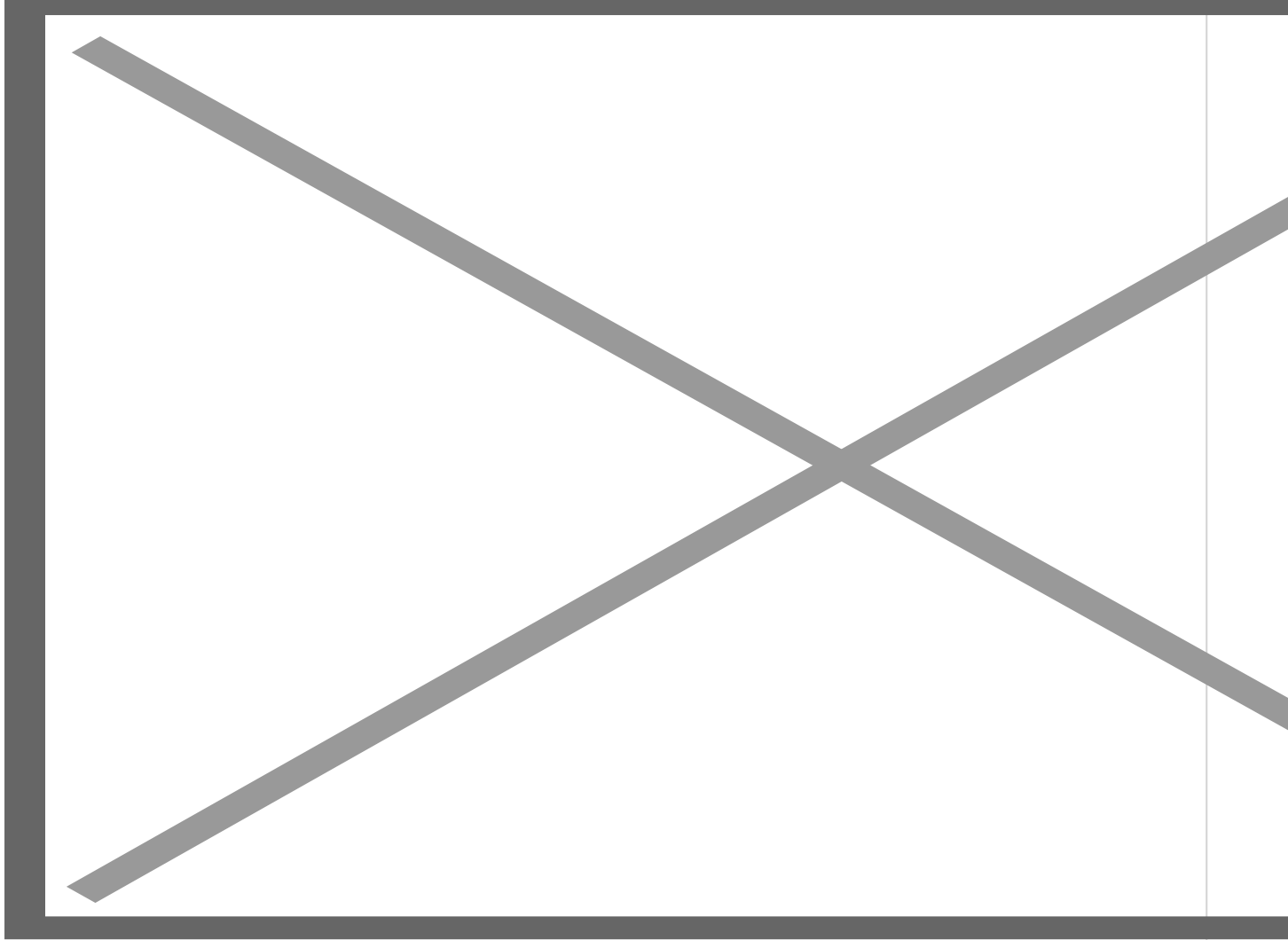


WHO says inequitable global vaccinations against coronavirus is a travesty

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Geneva, April 7 (RHC)-- It is a travesty that some countries still have not had enough access to vaccines to begin inoculating health workers and the most vulnerable people against COVID-19, the head of the World Health Organization said in Geneva.

"Scaling up production and equitable distribution remains the major barrier to ending the acute stage of the COVID-19 pandemic," WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a news conference.

"It's a travesty that in some countries health workers and those at-risk groups remain completely unvaccinated."

The president of Namibia, Hage Geingob, one of several world leaders invited to address the WHO news conference for World Health Day, decried "vaccine apartheid," under which some countries were forced to wait while others received doses.

Geingob said Namibia had received vaccines from "our friends" India and China, but was still waiting for other vaccines despite having paid a deposit for them. Tedros said Namibia would receive some vaccines from the WHO co-led COVAX program in around two weeks.

It comes as coronavirus-related deaths worldwide have crossed 3 million, according to a Reuters tally, as the latest global resurgence of Covid-19 infections is challenging vaccination efforts across the globe.

Worldwide virus deaths are rising once again, especially in Brazil and India. Health officials blame more infectious variants that were first detected in the UK and South Africa, along with public fatigue with lockdowns and other restrictions.

According to a Reuters tally, it took more than a year for the global coronavirus death toll to reach 2 million. The next 1 million deaths were added in about three months.

Brazil is leading the world in the daily average number of new deaths reported and accounts for one in every four deaths worldwide each day, according to a Reuters analysis. The WHO acknowledged the nation's dire condition due to coronavirus, saying the country is in a very critical condition with an overwhelmed healthcare system.

"Indeed there is a very serious situation going on in Brazil right now, where we have a number of states in critical condition," WHO epidemiologist Maria Van Kerkhove told a briefing last Thursday. She said that many hospital intensive care units are more than 90% full. India reported a record rise in COVID-19 infections yesterday, becoming the second nation after the US to post more than 100,000 new cases in a day.

India's worst-affected state, Maharashtra, began shutting shopping malls, cinemas, bars, restaurants, and places of worship, as hospitals are being overrun by patients.

The European region, which includes 51 countries, has the highest total number of deaths at nearly 1.1 million. Five European countries including the UK, Russia, France, Italy and Germany constitute about 60% of Europe's total coronavirus-related deaths.

The United States has the highest number of deaths of any country in the world at 555,000 and accounts for about 19% of all deaths due to COVID-19 globally.

Cases have risen for the last three weeks but health officials believe the nation's rapid vaccination campaign may prevent a rise in deaths. A third of the population has received at least one dose of a vaccine.

At least 370.3 million people or nearly 4.75% of the global population had received a single dose of COVID-19 vaccine by Sunday, according to latest figures from research and data provider firm Our World

in Data.

However, the WHO is urging countries to donate more doses of approved COVID-19 vaccines to help meet vaccination targets for the most vulnerable in poorer countries.

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