

Europe surpasses one million COVID-19 deaths



Geneva, April 16 (RHC)-- A top official from the World Health Organization (WHO) said Europe had surpassed one million deaths from COVID-19 and warned the situation remains “serious” in the region, with about 1.6 million new cases reported there each week.

The comments by WHO Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge aimed to emphasise that Europe must keep up its guard with social distancing and speed up vaccinations as virus variants drive new infections to record levels in some nations.

Overall, a tally by Johns Hopkins University shows nearly three million deaths have been linked to COVID-19 worldwide – with the Americas hardest hit, followed by Europe. The United States, Brazil and Mexico have reported the highest number of deaths, collectively at more than 1.1 million.

Speaking to reporters during a visit to Greece, Kluge did point to “early signs that transmission may be slowing across several countries” in WHO’s 53-country European region, which stretches into Central

Asia, and cited “declining incidence” among the oldest people. He said the proportion of COVID-19 deaths among people over 80, who have been prioritised for vaccines, had dropped to nearly 30 percent – the lowest level in the pandemic.

The United Kingdom in particular has seen new infections and COVID-19 deaths drop dramatically since January, due to a successful vaccination program and a prolonged national lockdown that is only being reversed in stages.

Addressing recent concerns about vaccines, Kluge also said the risk of people suffering blood clots is far higher for people with COVID-19 than for people who receive AstraZeneca’s coronavirus vaccine. “Let there be no doubt about it, the AstraZeneca vaccine is effective in reducing COVID-19 hospitalisation and preventing deaths,” he said, adding that WHO recommends its use for all eligible adults.

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