

Of lime and sand

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The director general of the World Health Organization, WHO, the Ethiopian Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus

By Guillermo Alvarado

The director general of the World Health Organization, WHO, the Ethiopian Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, said that this year the acute phase of the covid-19 pandemic could be lifted, but at the same time warned that new variants of the virus are possible, even more transmissible and dangerous.

This is a strange combination of news, one very good, such as the eventual end of the global health emergency for the coronavirus, the highest WHO alert level, followed by another, very bad, that the danger is far from over.

The reality is that all the conditions are in place for new SARS-CoV-2 mutations to occur, because globally a large number of the population has yet to receive any of the vaccines that exist today, especially in the least favored countries.

This allows the virus to continue to circulate and no one can foresee the development of more aggressive strains, so a worldwide effort is urgently needed for immunization to become widespread.

Unfortunately, this is not happening because the big pharmaceutical companies prefer to do business with rich governments and these, at the same time, continue to hoard doses and barely share those that are about to expire.

There are also other things that are difficult to explain and one of them is the reluctance of the WHO itself to certify vaccines produced in Russia, China and Cuba. It does not take a very bad mind to suppose that there are pressures of all kinds in the delay of this procedure.

In the face of a deadly disease, which according to the World Health Organization itself causes an average of one death every 12 seconds worldwide, we should be more expeditious.

Uplifting examples should be followed, such as that of Cuba, a small country with few natural resources, blocked by the world's leading economic power, but which is among the first because of the high percentage of its population protected with vaccines of national production of proven efficacy.

Unfortunately, it seems that there are many people looking the other way, in complex times even for the rich and developed countries, as is the case of Germany, which exceeded 8.7 million cases and where 63 thousand new cases were reported on Monday in just 24 hours.

It is worth remembering what Adhanom Ghebreyesus said, "... learning to live with covid should not mean that we have to let it have its way. It should not mean that we have to accept that 50,000 people die every week from a disease that we can prevent and cure".

A word to the wise is a word to the wise.

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