

ICCR Statement on US Withdrawal from the WHO

On July 7, 2020, the White House communicated to the UN Secretary General that the United States would officially withdraw from the World Health Organization (WHO). Additionally, in September, the United States announced that it will not join a global effort led by the WHO to develop, manufacture and distribute a vaccine against the coronavirus^[1]. As the foremost health agency in world, the WHO works tirelessly to solve our world's most complex public health problems, including the current pandemic.

ICCR members have been engaging pharmaceutical companies and others in the health care industry for years with the goal of making health care affordable and accessible for all. As shareholders we are concerned to see our decades-long investment threatened by what appears to be a political move with potentially devastating global health impacts.

To withdraw from the WHO in the midst of a global pandemic is both shortsighted and irresponsible. As the United States is the largest contributor to the WHO's budget, removing those funds could jeopardize the health of millions by undermining initiatives like the Solidarity Trial, an international research endeavor launched to find treatments for COVID-19. Other examples of the WHO's work to fight COVID-19 include^[2]:

- delivering more than 4 million masks and nearly 3 million boxes of gloves to over 135 countries with an additional 195 million masks and over 26 million boxes of gloves in the pipeline.
- strengthening laboratory capacity by supplying over 1.5 million diagnostic kits to more than 129 countries. An additional 30 million tests have since been ordered.
- coordinating international clinical trial efforts to speed up research on potential COVID-19 treatments.
- readying over 120 medical teams for deployment, with twenty emergency medical teams already deployed to over 16 countries.

The WHO is an indispensable organization fighting on the front lines of this current pandemic, as well as many other serious global health threats such as HIV, polio, and cancer. Withdrawing U.S. support from this crucial entity during a global health crisis will only serve to extend and exacerbate the suffering – both medical and economic – being felt around the world.

[1] <https://thehill.com/policy/healthcare/514657-us-wont-join-global-coronavirus-vaccine-initiative>

[2] https://static1.squarespace.com/static/5ee311cc159fc42b3e328e85/t/5f07fea50f35684829c36d2a/1594359464156/IDEAInitiative_WHO+Fact+Sheet.pdf