

EU calls for independent probe of WHO's pandemic response

May 18 2020, by Jamey Keaten and Maria Cheng



In this Monday, Feb. 24, 2020 file photo, Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), addresses a press conference about the update on COVID-19 at the World Health Organization headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland. The European Union is calling for an independent evaluation of the World Health Organization's response to the coronavirus pandemic, "to review experience gained and lessons learned." (Salvatore Di Nolfi/Keystone via AP, File)

The European Union and other countries on Monday called for an independent evaluation of the World Health Organization's response to the coronavirus pandemic "to review experience gained and lessons learned."

The resolution has the support of more than half of WHO's [member countries](#) and will be discussed this week at the decision-making body of the U.N. health agency, being held virtually this year.

The proposal is intended to initiate "a stepwise process of impartial, independent and comprehensive evaluation" of WHO's efforts to coordinate the international [response](#) to COVID-19, including the functioning of international health law and its actions within the greater U.N. health system.

The move comes amid Australia's call for an independent inquiry into the origins of the [pandemic](#) and WHO's response to it—and after U.S. President Donald Trump's repeated accusations that WHO helped China cover up the extent of the initial COVID-19 outbreak. Trump has also called for an immediate halt to all U.S. funding to the U.N. health agency.

The EU resolution proposes that the independent evaluation should be initiated "at the earliest appropriate moment" and should, among other issues, examine "the actions of WHO and their timelines pertaining to the COVID-19 pandemic."

WHO announced the coronavirus outbreak to be a global health emergency on Jan. 30, its highest level of alert. In the following weeks, WHO warned countries there was a narrowing "window of opportunity" to prevent the virus from spreading globally.

WHO officials, however, repeatedly described the transmission of the

virus as "limited" and said it wasn't as transmissible as flu; experts have since said COVID-19 spreads even faster. It declared the [outbreak](#) to be a pandemic on March 11, after the virus had killed thousands globally and sparked large epidemics in South Korea, Italy, Iran and elsewhere.

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Citation: EU calls for independent probe of WHO's pandemic response (2020, May 18) retrieved 23 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2020-05-eu-independent-probe-pandemic-response.html>

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