

# WHO to send team to China as it warns pandemic far from over

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Six months on from the novel coronavirus outbreak, the WHO said Monday it was sending a team to China to work towards finding the source—as it warned the pandemic was far from over.

And the World Health Organization warned that in an atmosphere of global division and politicisation of the COVID-19 crisis, it feared the

worst was yet to come.

The UN health agency lamented the "very tragic" milestones of 500,000 deaths and 10 million confirmed infections being reached, just as it marks on Tuesday six months since it was first informed of the outbreak in the Chinese city of Wuhan.

The WHO is sending a team to China next week in connection with the search for the origin of the virus that sparked the global pandemic.

The organisation has been pressing China since early May to invite in its experts to help investigate the animal origins of the coronavirus.

"We can fight the virus better when we know everything about the virus, including how it started," WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus told a virtual press conference.

"We will be sending a team next week to China to prepare for that and we hope that that will lead into understanding how the virus started."

He did not specify the make-up of the team, nor what specifically their mission would consist of.

Scientists believe the virus jumped from animals to humans, possibly from a market in Wuhan selling exotic animals for meat.

## **'We fear the worst'**

"Six months ago, none of us could have imagined how our world—and our lives—would be thrown into turmoil by this new virus," said Tedros.

"We all want this to be over. We all want to get on with our lives. But the hard reality is this is not even close to being over.

"Globally the pandemic is actually speeding up.

"We're all in this together, and we're all in this for the long haul.

"We have already lost so much—but we cannot lose hope."

Tedros also said that the pandemic had brought out the best and worst humanity, citing acts of kindness and solidarity, but also misinformation and the politicisation of the virus.

Unless international unity replaces fractious division, "the worst is yet to come. I'm sorry to say that," he said.

"With this kind of environment and condition, we fear the worst."

While the world races to find safe and effective vaccines and therapeutics against COVID-19, Tedros said countries such as South Korea had shown that the virus could be successfully suppressed and controlled without them.

He said governments needed to be "serious" about measures such as contact tracing, and citizens had to take responsibility for personal steps such as maintaining hand hygiene.

Reflecting on the global death toll and infection numbers, Tedros said: "Still, this could have been prevented through the tools we have at hand."

He added: "The critical question that all countries will face in the coming months is how to live with this virus. That is the new normal."

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