

WHO chief heads to China for virus talks

27 January 2020

The head of the World Health Organization headed to China on Sunday to discuss how to contain a virus outbreak that has killed 56 people and infected over 2,000 worldwide.

"I am on my way to Beijing, to meet with the government and [health experts](#) supporting the #coronavirus response," WHO chief Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said on Twitter.

"My WHO colleagues and I would like to understand the latest developments and strengthen our partnership with China in providing further protection against the outbreak."

The WHO also released its latest data showing a total of 2,014 cases—almost all of them in China.

The 29 confirmed cases outside China were in 10 countries.

On the advice of an emergency committee of international experts, Tedros last week stopped short of declaring the coronavirus outbreak an international public health emergency.

The designation by the UN health agency would prompt more concerted international action as there has been with other outbreaks such as Ebola and the [swine flu](#) pandemic, including possible trade and [travel restrictions](#).

China has locked down the hard-hit province of Hubei in the country's centre in an operation affecting tens of millions of people in a bid to slow the spread of the virus.

Tedros last week urged China to ensure lockdown measures are kept "short in duration" but has emphasised the openness shown by Chinese authorities since the first cluster of the outbreak was identified on December 31.

"If we are going to keep the world safe, transparency is number one," he told reporters then.

The previously unknown virus has caused global concern because of its similarity to the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS) pathogen, which killed hundreds across mainland China and Hong Kong in 2002-2003.

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