



UNOG Bi-weekly press briefing COVID-19 Update - WHO

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Shotlist

1. Wide shot: exterior, Lake Geneva with the United Nations Palais des Nations across the water, shafts of sunlight on the surface, Jura mountains to rear.
2. **SOUNDBITE (EN) – Dr Margaret Harris, spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):**
“In Western Europe we are seeing a steady decline – it’s not speedy – but there’s a steady decline in new cases being reported daily. So that means the number of new cases are still significant, but the numbers reported are coming down – except for Russia and Eastern Europe, we are still seeing the rise. So it’s more an east-west picture in Europe.”
3. Wide shot: UN Geneva main entrance, elevated view of front gates.
4. **SOUNDBITE (EN) – Dr Margaret Harris, spokesperson, World Health Organization (WHO):**
“A big study like that gives you a little piece of the puzzle, gives you a little bit of information, but it may be related to a setting, there’s much more work needs to be done around the world. So, we haven’t answered that – it was clear from the mission that returned from China, they said at the time that they did not think that asymptomatic - people who are asymptomatic - were significant drivers of the virus. Now there have been different opinions on that and we really won’t have an answer until we have got that kind of data from around the world.”
5. Medium shot: anti-war memorial at the Place des Nations, Geneva, with UN Geneva across the square.
6. Wide shot: “broken chair” sculpture at the Place des Nations, Geneva, with UN Geneva across the square

7. Medium shot: UN Geneva Palais des Nations, flag alley, UN flag in centre of shot.
8. Wide shot: UN Geneva Palais des Nations, flag alley, UN flag in distance.

Story

European COVID infections indicate 'east-west divide': WHO

Europe is seeing a “steady” decline in COVID-19 infections, although the generally positive trend has not happened in Russia and parts of Eastern Europe, the UN health agency said on Tuesday.

“In Western Europe we are seeing a steady decline – it’s not speedy – but there’s a steady decline in new cases being reported daily,” said Dr Margaret Harris, spokesperson for the World Health Organization (WHO).

Speaking via videoconference from WHO headquarters in Geneva, she added that although the level of new cases remained “significant”, the numbers reported “are coming down – except for Russia and Eastern Europe, we are still seeing the rise. So, it’s more an east-west picture in Europe.”

According to latest WHO data, Russia has identified 414,878 cases of infection with 4,855 deaths.

Asked about the significance of results from Wuhan city in China where authorities have just finished testing nearly 10 million people for infection, finding only 300 mainly asymptomatic cases, the WHO spokesperson insisted that much more research needed to be carried out globally to put this data into context.

“A big study like that gives you a little piece of the puzzle, gives you a little bit of information. But it may be related to a setting, there’s much more work that needs to be done around the world,” Dr Harris said.

Earlier this year, a WHO-led international mission to China and Wuhan – where the virus emerged last December - suggested that while asymptomatic transmission might play a part in spreading the disease, it did not appear to be not be the main “driver” of the outbreak, Dr Harris explained.

To date, China has reported 83,022 infections and 4,645 deaths, according to WHO.

“It was clear from the mission that returned from China, they said at the time that they did not think that asymptomatic - people who are asymptomatic - were significant drivers of the virus,” she said, referring to people who displayed no symptoms of the disease. “Now there have been different opinions on that and we really won’t have an answer until we have got that kind of data from around the world.”

Globally, on 2 June 2020, WHO reported more than six million confirmed cases of COVID-19, including 373,548 deaths.

The Americas is the epicentre by region, with more than 2.8 million cases, followed by Europe (2.2 million), Eastern Mediterranean (536,148), South-East Asia (272,512), Western Pacific (184,305) and Africa (108,121).