VOA NEWS

April 1, 2020

This is VOA news. Via remote, I'm Marissa Melton.

U.S. President Donald Trump has warned of a very "painful" couple of weeks ahead as the COVID-19 virus spreads further ahead of an expected peak in the number of cases.

He spoke Tuesday at an evening news conference at the White House, offering grim predictions. But he added that Americans will soon see what he called "the light at the end of the tunnel."

Despite vast improvements in countries, such as China and South Korea, the World Health Organization said Tuesday the coronavirus outbreak is far from over even in the Western Pacific region.

Dr. Takeshi Kasai, the WHO regional director for the Western Pacific, said Tuesday the outbreak is going to be a long-term battle. He said every country needs to continue its response.

China reported one new death and 48 new cases Tuesday, none of them locally transmitted, however, and South Korea reported 125 new cases.

Italy reported 837 more deaths on Tuesday, bringing its total to 12,428. Spain surpassed China in terms of overall cases. Only the United States has had more cases than Italy and Spain.

The United Nations is establishing a trust fund to support low and middle income countries in responding to the coronavirus pandemic and recovering from its socio-economic shock.

The U.N. Secretary-General António Guterres said the pandemic is the greatest test the world has faced since the formation of the United Nations 75 years ago. He is calling for a large-scale, coordinated, multilateral response amounting to at least 10 per cent of global gross [domet...] domestic product.

There are more than 820,000 confirmed cases worldwide of COVID-19 and at least 40,000 deaths.

From Washington D.C., this is VOA news.

Germany, Britain and France have facilitated exports of medical goods to Iran in the first use of a mechanism designed to get around U.S. sanctions, according to Germany on Tuesday.

A German Foreign Ministry statement did not specify exactly what type of medical supplies were involved, nor any companies that were part of the action.

It said now that the system had been used successfully, the two sides could "work on more transactions."

Iran and a group of five world powers signed a deal in 2015 that restricted Iran's nuclear program in exchange for sanctions relief.

After the United States withdrew from the deal and imposed sanctions, Iran pressured the European signatories to work around those restrictions to help its battered economy.

That pressure included Iran taking a series of steps away from its commitments under the 2015 deal, including caps on uranium enrichment.

Mexico has declared a month-long health emergency, with new restrictions on the size of gatherings, to contain the surging coronavirus that already exceeds 1,000 cases, with 28 deaths.

Reuters [new a...] news agency said Mexico will now only allow gatherings of no more than 50 people. It's extending its ban on non-essential activities.

Violators of the new rules are expected to face penalties, according to Mexico's foreign minister.

Mexico's latest move to contain the virus stops short of measures in place in some other Latin American countries in the grips of the virus, including lockdowns.

The United States is willing to lift sanctions against Venezuela in exchange for the formation of a transitional government [como...] comprised of allies of President Nicolás Maduro and opposition leader Juan Guaidó. That's according to U.S. Secretary of State Mike Pompeo on Tuesday.

The plan calls on Maduro and Guaidó to hand over power to a five-member council until presidential and parliamentary elections can be held within the next year.

Pompeo called on Maduro and Guaidó to form a transitional government which would be tasked with scheduling elections within six to 12 months.

Pompeo said the United States would welcome efforts by Guaidó to seek office in future elections, but maintained the U.S. position that Maduro must go.

The oil-rich country's economy, already weakened by a U.S. economic pressure campaign, has been dealt subsequent blows by the coronavirus pandemic and falling oil prices. The coronavirus has also crippled the country's health care system.

And once again, our top story. U.S. President Donald Trump today warned of a painful [few weeks] two weeks ahead as the COVID-19 virus spreads [further ahead in] ahead of an expected peak in the number of cases.

Via remote, I'm Marissa Melton. From Washington D.C., you're listening to VOA news.