

Vice President Chen Chien-jen (陳建生) on Wednesday took to Facebook to criticize the WHO for adopting two erroneous calculation methods that could have produced misleading information on the COVID-19 pandemic and caused panic.

First, the WHO only looks at the number of confirmed cases and fatalities, without taking into account the population of each nation, resulting in skewed risk assessments for contracting the virus, said Chen, an epidemiologist and public health expert.

Second, WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus sowed panic by warning the international community that the fatality rate of COVID-19 is about 3.4 percent, higher than the WHO initially thought.

When the number of confirmed cases in a nation drops, but the number of deaths increases, it should be checked whether its screening method has changed, rather than jumping to the conclusion that the fatality rate has become higher than originally estimated, Chen said.

Tedros' "reckless conclusion and false alarm" stem from his failure to ascertain whether nations' screening methodologies have changed, he said.

"Not only has he fallen short to alarm people around the world, he has caused unnecessary panic. He is really good for nothing," the vice president said.

As for the WHO declaring the COVID-19 outbreak a pandemic, the move came too late, he said.

Known for his gentle demeanor, Chen's frustration with Tedros and the WHO made headlines nationwide, but people quickly empathized with him given his medical background.

## WHO needs systemic reform

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However, what Taiwanese and a growing segment of the international community fail to empathize with is the WHO's behavior.

In Taiwan's battle against COVID-19, one recurring phrase has set the nation apart from the rest of the world and made it an example for many: "pre-emptive action."

The concept is applied every step of the way, from Premier Su Tseng-chang (蘇貞昌) in early January ordering stricter border control and an ad hoc intergovernmental meeting, an export ban on masks and mask rationing, to banning travelers from China and the strict enforcement of quarantine rules.

From the early stages of the outbreak, the WHO has proven that it is not foreign to the strategy of taking pre-emptive action, as shown by Tedros' announcement of the official name for the new virus to prevent people from referring to it by names that could stigmatize China.

For months, the WHO seems to have perversely viewed the outbreak through a prism that romanticizes everything China does.

A case in point, WHO technical consultant Maria Van Kerkhove said she was "touched" by China's actions, as "every person of the population knew what their role was in this outbreak" when asked about the WHO's repeated remarks that the world could learn from China in fighting the outbreak.

People must not forget the litany of compliments that Tedros has paid to China, including his praise of its "transparency" in providing information on the outbreak, his calls for "gratitude and respect" for China's efforts to prevent the virus from being exported, and his repeated assurances that the COVID-19 situation was under control in China.

Chen's criticism of Tedros and the WHO was an understatement, judging by the level of corruption in the UN agency.

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The WHO should ask itself whether it has lived up to its values to “engage with everyone honestly and in good faith and hold itself accountable for words and actions.” It should immediately undertake sweeping reforms, starting with the resignation of Tedros, who still has a chance to salvage the last bit of his integrity if he knows when to quit.

Source: [Taipei Times - Editorials 2020/03/17](#)