

GLOBAL DISORGANISATION

By Giulio Valesini and Cataldo Ciccolella

With the collaboration of: Alessia Marzi and Alessia Pelagaggi

DONALD TRUMP PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES - PRESS CONFERENCE 14 APRIL 2020

Today I'm instructing my administration to halt funding for the World Health Organization while a review is conducted to assess the World Health Organization's role in severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of Coronavirus.

GIULIO VALESINI

But the WHO's second largest donor after the USA is not a country, it's Bill Gates. His foundation gives the WHO more than half a billion dollars every two years. So he is the person who decides what the organisation's priorities are.

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

Bill Gates is killing the WHO and he's trying to demonstrate to the world that he's a great philanthropist and that he worries about the health of the human race.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN STUDIO

The World Health Organization is the UN agency responsible for health. It was established after the Second World War and since then its mission has been to ensure that the world's population is as healthy as it can possibly be. It should be an impartial body serving all countries. But in recent years it has been going through something of an identity crisis and the spread of the virus has underlined its critical issues, its weaknesses. On 14 April the WHO's biggest contributor, the government of the United States, announced its desire, through president Donald Trump, to turn off the taps. He accused the WHO of serious mistakes in their management of the epidemic and, in particular, of hiding vital information which could have contained the spread of the virus. The grounds for these allegations largely derive from doubts surrounding its Director General: Tedros. The former Minister of Health and Minister of Foreign Affairs in the Ethiopian government. He is one of the leaders of the Tigray People's Liberation Front party, which has close links with the Communist Party of China and, in particular, with the current President Xi Jinping, owing to China's significant investments in Ethiopia.

If Tedros is the first African person in history who's managed to climb the ranks of the WHO, he above all owes it to the votes from the African Union. Its members meet at its headquarters in Addis Ababa which was built, along with its digital network, by China, who also left a little gift inside: spies. Tonight's investigation will highlight the chain of mistakes and murky relationships which contributed to the spread of the virus. We'll understand that something is missing from the story of the pandemic, a piece of the jigsaw that someone hid, and we also take a look at Italy and those who, inside the Italian Ministry of Health, have a rather short memory. Let's listen to Cataldo Ciccolella and Giulio Valesini.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

It's 28 January. The Director General of the World Health Organization, Tedros

Ghebreyesus, is sitting across from the Chinese President Xi Jinping in the Great Hall of the People in Beijing.

XI JINPING - PRESIDENT OF THE PEOPLE'S REPUBLIC OF CHINA

As long as we strengthen our trust in each other, we help each other to control and prevent the virus in the most appropriate way possible and meticulously implement the plans, we'll surely defeat this disease.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The subject is the management of coronavirus. Tedros openly praises the Chinese government. But the reasons for this are unclear, considering that the WHO still hasn't conducted a proper inspection in China.

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS - DIRECTOR GENERAL OF THE WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

As soon as the virus was identified, its genome was immediately shared so that other countries could use it. And, at the same time, you undertook serious public health measures, and we're really proud of that. And the other important element is the political commitment and your personal leadership, which we have been following. And also your team, which will help stop this virus.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

They sensed the seriousness, but still waited 18 days before going to check for themselves.

GIULIO VALESINI

Did China tell us the whole truth about Covid-19?

NICOLETTA DENTICO - DIRECTOR, HEALTH INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

Are there any countries that have told us the whole truth about Covid-19? I doubt it. At the outset no government wants to declare an epidemic within their own borders, none, never, because it would hinder trade and China is the production hub of the world: so, it's not as easy as it might seem.

GIULIO VALESINI

Tedros is a politician.

NICOLETTA DENTICO - DIRECTOR, HEALTH INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

Just like all the others who ended up becoming Director General of the WHO.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Tedros is the first African person to climb the ranks of the WHO. In his country, Ethiopia, he was Minister of Health and then Minister of Foreign Affairs for governments which didn't hesitate to use violence against their opponents. His party is the much-feared TPLF: the Tigray People's Liberation Front.

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

While it was in government in Ethiopia, the TPLF was accused of corruption on many occasions. Tedros was not only a member of that government, Tedros is a leading figure in the TPLF.

GIULIO VALESINI

What connections does the party, the TPLF, have with China?

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

It was the TPLF, the party that held most of the power in government... that opened Ethiopia's doors to China.

GIULIO VALESINI

How grateful is Tedros to China?

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

He's said to be very grateful. The TPLF has very strong links with China.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

During his election to become the head of the WHO, Tedros had the support of the whole of the African Union. In other words, the continent in which, during recent years, China has invested a flood of money to weave a new Silk Road. Tedros's Ethiopia received billions in investments, especially in infrastructure. This is the railway linking Addis Ababa to Djibouti, 756 km long. A strategic project for the continent, it cost 4 billion dollars. And the Chinese banks played a major role.

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

According to estimates, half of Ethiopia's debt is in Chinese hands.

GIULIO VALESINI

Tedros was nominated and supported by the entire African Union.

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

Yes.

GIULIO VALESINI

In recent years, how much has Africa become tied, in a financial sense, to China?

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

A lot, and many African countries are now starting to realise that China's lending a helping hand to the continent wasn't free of charge.

GIULIO VALESINI

What are the collateral clauses?

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

China...if you don't give them... if from that infrastructure, for example a port, a motorway, they don't get a return on their investment as per agreement, they take over the management of that infrastructure.

GIULIO VALESINI

So you're basically under their thumb...

MASSIMO ZAURRINI - EDITOR-IN-CHIEF OF "AFRICA E AFFARI" (AFRICA AND BUSINESS MAGAZINE)

You're under their thumb.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

This African Union building holds many secrets: this is where the organisation's 56 countries meet. A 200-million-dollar gift from Xi Jinping's government, including the digital infrastructure for communications, which according to an investigative report by *Le Monde*, refuted by the people involved, China used to spy on the African Union's activities.

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

Data which went through the African Union's headquarters was intercepted by the Chinese government from within the same building.

GIULIO VALESINI

So China could easily discover the African Union's secrets?

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

Yes, virtually directly. China has very strong relationships with a number of different countries: from South Africa to Angola and Nigeria, Ethiopia, but also Djibouti where China created its first foreign military base in 2017.

GIULIO VALESINI

Money, investments: is this the string that's currently keeping Tedros tied to China?

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

Of course...

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

What's certain is that the WHO, with Tedros as its Director General, was somewhat lenient towards China with respect to the communication delays regarding Covid-19. On 14 January the World Health Organization tweeted from its official account that "preliminary investigations conducted by the Chinese authorities have found no clear evidence of human-to-human transmission of the virus". The first admission statements weren't to arrive for another eight days: on 22 January, when there were already thousands of people infected.

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

First of all, it took us a week to understand that people showing symptoms didn't coincide with the beginning of the spread of the epidemic. Because our first symptomatic case was on 20 February, but three percent of the population was already infected. Now, you tell me, how is it possible to have one case showing symptoms and three percent of the population infected: how did they get it?

GIULIO VALESINI

The World Health Organization didn't tell the whole truth about what they knew?

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

The World Health Organization blindly believed what China was saying without carrying out the appropriate checks, and passed that information on as its own. The data we had right from the outset wasn't consistent with what China published.

GIULIO VALESINI

Waiting until 22 January to admit human-to-human transmission was a delay?

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

When this epidemic is all over, the World Health Organization will probably have some explaining to do. It will need to explain if the existence of an organisation made up of highly paid bureaucrats is justified on the basis of what's happened up until now.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Andrea Crisanti is the virologist who's been responsible for managing the Covid-19 emergency in Veneto. He's the one who created the famous "Vò" model: swabs for everyone, even for those not showing symptoms. He studied the infection curves disclosed by China. And he realised that something was missing.

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

A piece of the curve is missing. Look at the Italian curve, look at the Spanish and American ones: you can see this kind of J shape that goes up like this, this is the exponential phase and then the bell curve starts. All this part is missing from the Chinese curve. The so-called exponential phase is missing.

GIULIO VALESINI

What do you think it means?

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

It means without doubt... at least my interpretation is that a huge chunk of the history of the epidemic is missing.

GIULIO VALESINI

In your opinion, when did this epidemic really begin?

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

Perhaps between the end of October and the beginning of November.

GIULIO VALESINI

We've got two months missing.

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

We've got a good two and a half months missing.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN STUDIO

In other words, we are missing those two months which could have changed the fate of the world. A study published by the University of Hong Kong – which ironically collaborates with the WHO – included a report which claimed there were 232,000 Covid-19 cases in China on 20 February, four times the number officially declared by

the Chinese government. So, it's important to remind ourselves of some of the dates in this sequence of events.

On 8 December we got news of the first infection, which in fact dates back to 17 November.

Between 24 and 27 December some test laboratories received samples and isolated the virus sequence.

On 30 December, Dr Li Wenliang warned his colleagues and fellow citizens about the presence of the virus and said, "Stay alert and take precautions". But the police forced him to declare that he was spreading fake news and the doctor subsequently died of the virus. But on the same day, 30 December, Dr Ai Fen, the doctor in charge of the emergency department at Wuhan's public hospital said she had read a medical report which clearly referred to the "SARS Coronavirus" disease, and the word was even circled.

On 31 December the censorship started, according to CitizenLab at the University of Toronto, on social platforms such as WeChat: 132 words were censored, terms such as local authorities, epidemic, central government, cover-up.

These are important dates because exactly at that time China was informing the WHO, but it still wasn't talking about human-to-human transmission; it talked about "pneumonia of unknown causes".

On 3 January, Caixin published the news that the Chinese National Health Commission ordered the destruction of the analysed samples, but the newspaper, which claimed to actually have seen that order, was censored later on.

On 9 January the break-out of the epidemic is made official, it's in Wuhan, it's said to be caused by a new virus. Only on 11 January the first victim was confirmed – on 11 January. On the 12th, the Shanghai Public Health Center laboratory was closed. One of its professors – Shang Yongzhen – had published the virus sequence online. But the results dated back to at least a week earlier, the same date they were also communicated to the National Health Commission. Between 18 and 19 January, according to *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*, despite there officially being an epidemic in Wuhan, the richest banquet in history took place in that very city. 40 thousand people invited, the most attended banquet in the world. On 23 January, Wuhan was put in lockdown, but the mayor, with a disarming attitude, admitted that 5 million people had already left in the previous few days. The WHO still didn't declare an international public health emergency.

Between 25 January and 1 February, the businessman Fang Bin published a video on Facebook showing eight dead bodies; since then he's gone missing. Finally, on 30 January, the WHO declared a "global health emergency" due to Covid-19. On 5 February, the Chinese Cyberspace Administration – the government agency responsible for regulating the internet – announced that anyone spreading information on the internet intended to cause fear would be punished.

Two journalists and activists who raised the alarm about the credibility of the official statements went missing after being arrested by the police at the beginning of February. On 1 March, the journalist Li Zehua was arrested, and the Chinese Organisation for the Protection of Human Rights published a list detailing 897 cases of repression. On 18 March, China took the press passes away from journalists from *The New York Times*, *The Wall Street Journal* and *The Washington Post*. And, after all this, one of the countries that shares a border with China counted just six deaths as a result of the virus. That was because they had read the online messages exchanged by Chinese doctors who were later censored, and immediately took action.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Taiwan is a small republic with a population of 23 million people. It's barely 180 kilometres from China. Yet it was spared from the epidemic: at the end of April it had 400 confirmed infections and six deaths. China doesn't recognise it as a country and claims sovereignty over it, so that it isn't part of the UN and the World Health Organization.

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

Up until 2016 Taiwan was an observer at the WHO's World Health Assembly, then...

GIULIO VALESINI

So it took part in meetings

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

Exactly, as an observer because it wasn't recognised as a sovereign state.

GIULIO VALESINI

But they could express their opinion.

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

As of 2017 this was no longer possible because in 2016 Cai Yingwen was elected president in Taiwan and she made it quite clear that she was against the reunification of Taiwan with the People's Republic of China.

GIULIO VALESINI

Basically Tedros isolated Taiwan from the World Health Organization.

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

Actually, it was China that excluded Taiwan.

GIULIO VALESINI

But Tedros could potentially have opposed it?

GIORGIO CUSCITO - LIMES ANALYST

After being appointed Director General of the WHO he reiterated that the principle of a unified China had to be respected, so he basically sided with Beijing.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

And given that Tedros and his deputies waited until the end of January to admit to the world that the virus could be transmitted from human to human, from the very outset Taiwan didn't trust the official communications. And spared itself. On 31 December, the Taipei Centre for Disease Control sent the following e-mail to the World Health Organization: they wanted information on a possible human-to-human transmission of a new virus. On the same day the government started checking travellers coming from Wuhan for symptoms. On 5 January, the checks were extended to any passenger who arrived from Wuhan during the previous 14 days.

ANDREA SING-YING LEE - TAIWAN AMBASSADOR TO ITALY

We had strong concerns that something was being kept quiet.

GIULIO VALESINI

Did you have any unofficial information to make you think this?

ANDREA SING-YING LEE - TAIWAN AMBASSADOR TO ITALY

Late one night, Taiwanese doctors saw some posts written by Chinese doctors, saying that "there is a situation that cannot be made public because it's forbidden by the government, but be warned that this situation exists".

GIULIO VALESINI

So, it was a communication between doctors?

ANDREA SING-YING LEE - TAIWAN AMBASSADOR TO ITALY

These doctors told our government, told the Director of the Centre for Infectious Disease Control and the latter wrote to the WHO.

GIULIO VALESINI

It's something of a paradox that the only large country – since you have a population of 25 million – that's not part of the WHO is the one that best dealt with the Covid-19 pandemic.

ANDREA SING-YING LEE - TAIWAN AMBASSADOR TO ITALY

The fact that it had been made impossible for us to rely on the help of the WHO made us strong and prepared. We've had a close relationship with China for over 70 years: trade, finance, investment, tourism, weddings across the Taiwan Strait. We know what China is like. When they say there isn't a problem, there is a problem; when they say the problem isn't big, the problem is big. When we ask China, "What's happening?" and they reply, "Well, something's up, but don't worry about it", we worry.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Professor Crisanti also has doubts about the information that came from China.

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

I virtually don't believe anything that China says.

GIULIO VALESINI

The problem is that the World Health Organization believed them...

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

Well! In that case it would be interesting to ask the World Health Organization, given they conducted an inspection there, what data they gathered.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The doctor who conducted the mission in China for the World Health Organization is Bruce Aylward. He's held strategic roles in the organisation over a number of years. In the middle of March he declared in writing that he was available for an interview with us, but it was later mysteriously cancelled. But he decided to speak to our colleague Yvonne Tong from Hong Kong Television. And when they asked him about Taiwan, which is the subject *Report* wanted him to talk about, Bruce Aylward was unable to hide his embarrassment.

YVONNE TONG - RTHK JOURNALIST

Will the WHO reconsider Taiwan's membership of the organisation? ... Hello?

BRUCE AYLWARD - SENIOR ADVISOR, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

I'm sorry, I couldn't hear your question Yvonne.

YVONNE TONG - RTHK JOURNALIST

Okay, let me repeat the question.

BRUCE AYLWARD - SENIOR ADVISOR, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

No, that's okay. Let's move on to the next one.

YVONNE TONG - RTHK JOURNALIST

I'm actually interested in discussing Taiwan as well, Taiwan's case.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The line went dead and our colleague called the WHO director back.

YVONNE TONG - RTHK JOURNALIST

I was just wondering if you could give us your thoughts on how Taiwan has done so far in terms of containing the virus.

BRUCE AYLWARD - SENIOR ADVISOR, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Well, we've already talked about China, and you know, when you look across all the different areas of China, they've actually all done quite a good job. So with that I'd like to thank you very much for inviting us, and good luck with your battle in Hong Kong.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

And luck is exactly what people had to rely on, those people living in countries that observed the WHO's directives to the letter. Like the one which was published about the use of face masks. It said: "A surgical mask is not required in public areas". A provision that was deliberately ignored by Taiwan.

GIULIO VALESINI

You did exactly the opposite of what the WHO said.

ANDREA SING-YING LEE - TAIWAN AMBASSADOR TO ITALY

Yes, exactly. We questioned their recommendation. We started distributing face masks.

GIULIO VALESINI

In January you said you would repurpose your industrial production facilities to make face masks, and that within a month you would be making 15 million masks, was it per day?

ANDREA SING-YING LEE - TAIWAN AMBASSADOR TO ITALY

Yes, from 1.5 million to 15 million a day.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

In Veneto coronavirus killed fewer people than in Lombardy, Emilia Romagna and Piedmont. The watchword in Veneto was: mass testing. Even those without symptoms. A strategy that went against the World Health Organization's guidelines and the decree by the Italian Minister of Health of 25 February that was based on those guidelines. A choice that was also criticised by Walter Ricciardi, the advisor chosen by the Italian Minister of Health Speranza and who's also a member of the WHO's executive committee.

ANDREA CRISANTI - VIROLOGY LABORATORY DIRECTOR, UNIVERSITY OF PADUA

We've never seen the scientific evidence that supported these WHO directives, which the Italian government then used as basis for its own directives; in fact it was quite the contrary. Afterwards, the studies that carried out detailed investigations into how this virus is transmitted, starting with Vò, Taiwan, and then the Icelandic experiment, all demonstrated exactly the opposite.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The World Health Organization's Director General Tedros changed his mind regarding the need for testing. But only on 16 March.

TEDROS ADHANOM GHEBREYESUS - DIRECTOR GENERAL WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION - PRESS CONFERENCE 16 MARCH 2020

There's just one message for our member states: test, test, test.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN STUDIO

Once the horse has bolted, what's the point in shutting the gate? Anyway, it seems obvious that the WHO didn't really have a clear idea of what to do. But who makes the decisions? We tried to understand the rationale behind their thinking, behind the World Health Organization's antivirus strategy; we also asked for all the guidelines that were issued. Anyway, aside from the fact that they didn't want to provide them, the ones that we managed to get hold of are indicative enough. In less than two months they changed tack five and a half times. They actually started well on 15 January: they told doctors to check everyone arriving from Wuhan with acute respiratory syndrome, but also to keep a close eye on those whose illness took an unexpected clinical course, regardless of the epidemiological link. Then on 21 January they changed their mind and said, "Just test and analyse those coming from Wuhan or those who have been in contact with Covid patients or those coming from at-risk hospitals". But on 25 January they backtracked and informed doctors to stay on high alert, regardless of where patients came from. Just three days later, on 28 January, they narrowed the identification of Covid patients once again, to include just those with epidemiological links. On 31 January they confirmed this approach, but passed this ticking bomb over to doctors saying, stay alert and apply your own clinical judgement, you could also test some suspected patients who do not have any epidemiological links. We had to wait until 27 February, when the situation had already seriously degenerated, for the WHO to clearly state, "Focus on anyone displaying potential symptoms". So, unlike Taiwan, the Italian Ministry put a lot of effort into trying to follow these guidelines, which changed even before they could be updated. We had to wait until 9 March for them to decide that all suspected cases had to be dealt with. But the situation in Codogno had already exploded and Pandora's box was well and truly open.

GIULIO VALESINI

These are all your... how can we say... updates.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

Our communications, yes.

GIULIO VALESINI

Your communications. The ones in dark green have no reference to an epidemiological

link and for this reason they look for the infection a bit more widely, whereas the ones in yellow are those that have an epidemiological link; so, we believe they allowed cases to slip through the net.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

I believe there was some confusion, in January at least, regarding the definition of cases...

GIULIO VALESINI

The thing that surprises me is that, with time, one might expect to acquire more knowledge and therefore improve. But you did the opposite – first the WHO and, as a consequence, you. You went from good to worse.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

Clearly we followed the WHO recommendations, but they weren't the only recommendations, there were also those by the ECDC, so let's say...

GIULIO VALESINI

So what you're saying is that the advice helped us get things wrong.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

Probably, as a doctor – right now I'm taking my political hat off – as a doctor I perhaps would have considered a wider case initially and narrowed it down later.

GIULIO VALESINI

In any case, we noticed that through this sustained attempt to follow the latest WHO recommendations... sometimes some truly absurd things occurred, for example the Italian Ministry updated...

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

Before you go on, yes, I noticed that as well...

GIULIO VALESINI

I mean, you were issuing an update and at the same time the WHO was changing it.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

These are the questions that I asked myself and that I have asked... Obviously there were local factors that came into play, such as task forces, experts, the National Health Council and then there were obviously international factors, for example the WHO. Those are the guidelines, and they're quite diverse: on the 15th they said one thing, on the 21st something else, then on the 25th they backtracked to the 15th and then, if I remember correctly, on the 31st they backtracked to the 21st. Please tell me if I remember the dates correctly.

GIULIO VALESINI

Yes, you did your homework well.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

And I asked myself the same question, I pointed this out. But if scientists then tell me, "No, it's like this... and like that".

GIULIO VALESINI

I just have one question to ask, do you call this science or confusion? Please, be honest.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

That's a good question, speaking as a doctor it was a bit misleading.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The Italian Ministry of Health followed the WHO recommendation regarding the use of face masks to the letter. Also partly because there weren't enough masks to go round. On 23 February, in a memorandum of understanding with the affected regions the Italian Minister Speranza declared: "Use masks only if there is a suspicion of being infected".

GIULIO VALESINI

For weeks the Italian Ministry of Health didn't recommend the compulsory use of masks for everyone, this is the question...

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

Are you asking me if using masks would have been necessary in the whole of Italy prior to 20 February? Actually, it's difficult to say.

GIULIO VALESINI

What about after?

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

After, for sure, at least in the areas... at least in the areas where the infection was found, it's clear that it drastically reduces...

GIULIO VALESINI

But, sorry, on this the Ministry didn't issue a clear communication, did it?

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

Because there's no scientific evidence.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN STUDIO

Especially because we didn't have the masks. Our pandemic plan was drafted in 2010 but it's never been updated; it allegedly included the stocking of face masks, of personal protective equipment that had to be supplied to doctors, nurses and to the more exposed categories of workers, such as the emergency services and to protect the most vulnerable, like the elderly. It also established protocols for hospitals and identified intensive care needs. This plan should have been implemented by the regions, but it wasn't. This should have been coordinated, there's actually a body, the CCM, the disease control centre, a body that provides a link between the Ministry of Health and the regions. Between 2014 and 2017 it was headed by Ranieri Guerra, who was also the Director for Prevention in the Italian Ministry of Health: the institution, the department, in charge of pandemic plans. So, no stockpiling of masks or personal protective equipment, despite this being strongly recommended by the WHO. The very organisation that had Tedros appointing Ranieri Guerra as one of its assistant directors.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

We've been asking him for an interview for over a month, but with no luck. But finally we managed to get hold of him on the phone.

GIULIO VALESINI

Why don't you want us to interview you? What's going on?

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR, GENERAL WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

(laughs) I try to spread them out, as much as possible.

FROM TG1 SPECIALE OF 18/04/2020

We have here, finally let's say, Ranieri Guerra, Doctor Guerra....

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

It doesn't really seem to be the case, judging from the number of TV and press appearances in recent weeks.

FROM IN MEZZ'ORA IN PIU OF 22/03/2020

There is a fundamental readiness problem in all countries...

FROM LA VITA IN DIRETTA OF 17/04/2020

Those who originally didn't understand, they didn't understand what the trend is for this kind of epidemic.

FROM CARTA BIANCA OF 21/04/2020

They're tests on venous blood and not on capillary blood...

FROM SPECIALE RAI NEWS OF 18/04/2020

I think an immediate assessment could have been carried out...

FROM TG1 SPECIALE OF 18/04/2020

There is internal competition between countries...

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

On 31 March Ranieri Guerra, the day after our first episode, for which he had already declined an invitation, appears on the programme *Agorà*, and after being pushed into a corner by our colleague Serena Bortone, he answered as follows.

FROM AGORÀ OF 31/03/2020

SERENA BORTONE

Yesterday *Report* said that the Italian pandemic plan hadn't been updated since 2010. You were Director General for Preventive Healthcare at the Ministry of Health until 2017, so in some ways you were also responsible for this pandemic plan; is it true that it hadn't been updated since 2010?

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

That's not the case, *Report* can say what they like, but they know there are also certain levels of confidentiality that have to be observed.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Ranieri Guerra didn't provide an answer regarding his responsibilities with respect to the failure to apply the pandemic plan. He actually just raised a smoke screen and talked about secret plans which had nothing to do with the plans for fighting a pandemic.

FROM AGORÀ OF 31/03/2020

SERENA BORTONE

Sorry, let's just get this straight, by confidentiality you mean there was a plan, but it couldn't be made public?

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR, GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

There are lines of action that are activated as soon as an epidemic of this type takes hold.

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR, GENERAL WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Which are not published but exist nonetheless.

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

They are partially published, the parts that require the involvement of the local administrations are published.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

We contacted Ranieri Guerra because between 2014 and 2017 he was the Director General for Prevention at the Italian Ministry of Health. He should have taken care of updating the pandemic plan. As director of CCM, he should also have coordinated the regions to enable them to prepare their own pandemic plans, and he should have stockpiled face masks to protect doctors, nurses and the most vulnerable.

GIULIO VALESINI

I just wanted to know if *Report* deserved ten minutes of your time, you know, out of respect for our viewers, that's all.

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Your insistence is really rather tiresome.

GIULIO VALESINI

We also wanted to ask you about your time as Director General at the Ministry of Health, when the pandemic plans needed updating but weren't.

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

I don't know anything about what the Italian Government has done in the last three years.

GIULIO VALESINI

It's a really simple question: did you know or not that Italy hadn't stockpiled face masks and wasn't ready with its pandemic plans?

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

I don't know, I really have no idea, as I'm not part of the Italian Government. I don't know. But, I'm sorry, it's been three years, in three years anything can happen. You're asking me questions that in all honesty...

GIULIO VALESINI

What did you do in three years with respect to updating the pandemic plans? We talked to every Italian region, some pandemic plans even date back to 2006, 2007. Our last official pandemic plan is from 2010. You were a Director of that Ministry for three years and you are saying, "You're asking me questions that have got nothing to do with me". I believe you should have known.

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

Please ask the Italian Government about things that are to do with the Italian Government, why are you asking me, I was part of a past administration.

GIULIO VALESINI

You've held a high position in our Ministry, so why didn't you tell the Italian Government in January, "Buy face masks, repurpose production, we're not in good shape"? You knew.

RANIERI GUERRA - ASSISTANT-DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION

No, I didn't know. Are you joking? I was part of a different administration, it's been three years now.

GIULIO VALESINI

We spoke to a former Director General of the Ministry, who since then has become senior director at the WHO. He said he left three years ago and in the meantime someone in the Ministry should have thought about it and should have updated things, perhaps you knew, I mean, what happened in the meantime, we were told to ask you.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

I'm here to give you... I'm the one showing up, I'm here to try to give you an answer, but clearly I can't give an answer... I can only answer for what I do.

GIULIO VALESINI

Why weren't the pandemic plans updated?

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

Clearly, the answer to that question should come from those who were here before us. I've asked the same questions and to various departments, to the Secretary General, about the pandemic plans. And the current pandemic plan is the same as that which was in effect in 2009, 2010. So the questions you are asking are the same I've been asking myself, which I did, and I'm still waiting for the answers.

GIULIO VALESINI

Exactly, and you still haven't had any satisfactory answers.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

I got some answers, but what I'd like to know is, who has been, shall we say, involved in the updating; specifically I'm after names, surnames, CVs. There should have been a draft completed between 2016 and 2017, involving different ministerial and intra-ministerial working groups, obviously with the necessary help of the regions since they are the ones who actually have to apply the pandemic plan, which requires a significant number of activities to be implemented, and so we are still waiting, let's say, to complete this draft.

GIULIO VALESINI

The role of coordinator is fulfilled by a body, called the CCM, which is normally led by this Ministry's Director General for Prevention.

PIERPAOLO SILERI - DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

It's a department in this Ministry, yes...

GIULIO VALESINI

That person should know where the Regions are up to, shouldn't they, in terms of implementing these pandemic plans. They should ask the Region, where have you got to so far? Have you stockpiled? Are you ready with face masks, etc. I get the sense that we were unprepared

PIERPAOLO SILERI DEPUTY HEALTH MINISTER

In the end we'll take stock, if anyone has made any mistakes, they should pay.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN THE STUDIO

Exactly, but who has to pay? The Deputy Health Minister Sileri honestly admits that the 2010 pandemic plan was never implemented or updated. But I've just come in, I've asked for clarifications within the Ministry and I'm not getting any answers. Those who could have answered are the former Director General Claudio D'Amario, who resigned in December and recently left, and his predecessor, who was in post until 2017, Ranieri Guerra. Undoubtedly two eminent professors, but who took their eye off the ball with regard to this situation. And Ranieri Guerra also seems a bit absent-minded, because he knew well and good that the pandemic plan should have been implemented and that it wasn't. He knew exactly how he'd left things. And then discovered that the only thing that looked anything like a pandemic plan was a draft drawn up in 2016. We also asked Tedros for an interview, but his press office responded by criticising *Report*: it says, "*In view of your journalistic style we don't see the use in accepting your invitation*". He doesn't like the way we ask questions. Now, it'd be easy for us to reply that we're not terribly enthusiastic about the way they managed this pandemic either. Anyway, we're not looking for culprits, we're not even looking for those responsible, we are just trying to understand which mistakes were made, so they won't happen again. And also because we believe in the WHO, we believe in the institution as long as it's independent from politics and from the pressure of pharmaceutical lobbies. Because history tells us that it wasn't always that independent.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

In 2009, the world was concerned about another virus: H1N1.

US NEWS JOURNALIST

The new swine flu sweeping across Mexico has pandemic potential, the WHO says.

US NEWS JOURNALIST

The swine flu is in Europe. A case has been confirmed.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Started in Mexico, the H1N1 flu infected the entire world in just a few months. On 11 June, for the first time in 40 years, the WHO declared a pandemic.

MARGARET CHAN - DIRECTOR GENERAL, WORLD HEALTH ORGANIZATION 2006 - 2017

I've decided to increase the pandemic flu alert level from phase five to six.

JEAN PIERRE DOOR - RAPPORTEUR FRENCH PARLIAMENTARY INVESTIGATION COMMITTEE ON THE VACCINATION CAMPAIGN

The activation of level six triggered the purchase of vaccines. Should we have opposed this and not have accepted it? France couldn't afford not to accept it, other countries did the same.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The declaration of pandemic status by the WHO Expert Committee triggered the mandatory purchase of vaccines in every country, including Italy.

EDUARDO MISSONI - FORMER ADVISOR TO THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

The components were secret, with the idea being that keeping them secret would protect them from industry influence.

GIULIO VALESINI

So, basically, the accusation was that the WHO declared...

EDUARDO MISSONI - FORMER ADVISOR TO THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You declare a pandemic and start drafting the contracts

EDUARDO MISSONI - FORMER ADVISOR TO THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Italy was bound by a contract with multinational pharmaceutical companies to buy vaccines, but only if a pandemic was declared. I believe 24 million vaccine doses were bought...

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

German Velasquez was senior director at the WHO for over 20 years: he managed the Drug Action programme. And now he reveals certain details about what happened in those days within the WHO.

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

Back then a task force of around 20 people was set up, and I was part of it. But I couldn't attend the meeting with the pharmaceutical companies that were earmarked to produce the vaccines. When I arrived the usher stopped me on the door and said, "No. You can't go in". I was opposed to declaring a pandemic, infections were spreading very quickly, but the mortality rate was very low. And I said that if it was going to be declared the necessary drugs and vaccines should be in the public domain. This idea didn't go down well.

GIULIO VALESINI

Do you believe that the declaration of a pandemic by the World Health Organization on that occasion favoured the big pharmaceutical companies?

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

Without doubt, it was the deal of the century.

GIULIO VALESINI

Of those within the WHO, who vaccinated themselves against H1N1V?

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

I didn't personally. And of my 2,500 colleagues who worked at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, I'm not aware of anybody who did. And I'll tell you more: during a press conference, four months after the release of the vaccine, Margaret Chan was asked: "Director General, have you been vaccinated yourself?" and she answered: "Well, I've been too busy, I haven't had time"

VOICE OF FRENCH NEWS REPORTER

As is tradition for a vaccination campaign, the Minister of Health is vaccinated live.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

In the end, only a few million people in Europe were vaccinated. But the whole operation cost countries hundreds of millions of euros. Italy paid 184 million for 24 million doses. Only 900 thousand doses were used. In the end H1N1 caused less deaths than a seasonal flu. The pandemic risk turned out to be unfounded.

GIULIO VALESINI

We were left with a useless supply of vaccines.

EDUARDO MISSONI - FORMER ADVISOR TO THE DIRECTORATE GENERAL FOR DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION IN THE ITALIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS

Yes, nobody knows where they ended up. I think we donated them to some developing country, but I don't know what they could have done with them.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The H1N1 campaign also failed in Germany. Only 5% of the population were vaccinated. Since 2009, Wolfgang Wodarg has been lambasting this fake pandemic. Back then he was President of the European Health Committee. He believes that the

experts knew about the low risk but chose to favour the finances of the pharmaceutical laboratories.

WOLFGANG WODARG - PRESIDENT OF THE EUROPEAN HEALTH COMMITTEE 2009

In 2009, there wasn't sufficient data to show the morbidity and mortality associated with a phase six pandemic or to declare that alert level. So the WHO had their finger on the trigger, the operation was prepared in advance. The WHO had to declare the pandemic, so that the countries committed to obtaining a certain quantity of medicines under predetermined conditions would go ahead with their commitment.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

In the end the WHO accepted responsibility. But no criminal activity has ever been identified.

NICOLETTA DENTICO - DIRECTOR HEALTH INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

Because some of the members of the WHO group.... It was discovered that it also had a conflict of interest.

GIULIO VALESINI

How influential are the pharmaceutical companies within the WHO and how much conflict of interest is there?

NICOLETTA DENTICO - DIRECTOR, HEALTH INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

The WHO mirrors the weaknesses, contradictions and inconsistencies of the member countries.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN STUDIO

But it might do so because when an organisation is soft it's easier for the lobbyists to penetrate it. In the case of swine flu, it had been 40 years since the last pandemic was declared. Only later on it was discovered that this declaration was linked to the need to force countries to adhere to the contracts they had with the pharmaceutical companies. Those contracts for the purchase of a vaccine which later proved to be some sort of a flop, especially when considering that the same WHO members who voted for this pandemic declaration didn't even have themselves vaccinated. So, in the end, one might find this a bit ridiculous, an observer might say that if this is the organisation's behaviour perhaps it should be closed down. We wouldn't go that far, on the contrary, we will continue to believe in the institution as long as it learns from past mistakes.

VOICE ON CNN NEWS

The WHO is working to contain the spread of the terrible Ebola virus that's currently in three African countries, possibly four.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

After H1N1, another virus caught the WHO unprepared. In December 2013 a new strain of Ebola emerged. In western Africa and in Canada it was panic. The crisis unit met more than once a day. Keiji Fukuda, Deputy Director General of the WHO, attended the meetings. Doctor Hugonnet reported back after returning from Conakry in Guinea, where the epidemic started.

STÉPHANE HUGONNET - SCIENTIFIC EXPERT, WHO.

There are three areas with active transmissions and cases. The message is that the epidemic is not over. It involves the entire country, the impact zone extends for more than 1,000 km. It's an international epidemic. Extra resources are needed to understand and get on top of this epidemic.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

It's the first time that a case of transmission occurred in a megalopolis with millions of inhabitants. In-situ, the WHO was leading the activities of tens of experts who had urgently arrived, one of whom was Manuguerra from the Institut Pasteur.

JEAN-CLAUDE MANUGUERRA - VIROLOGIST, INSTITUT PASTEUR

We need to hurry because the epidemic could get out of hand, we need to hurry because the chain reaction could overwhelm the system.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

In Conakry, Médecins Sans Frontières built a centre that was separate from the hospital. The Ebola village.

WOMAN

Call if you need any help, I'll stay here.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Without vaccines or cures, the doctors could only comfort the ill and tend to the dying. All suspected infections also had to be isolated. Samples were taken to establish the diagnoses. A French laboratory in Lyon conducted the analysis. You had to be quick to ensure blood samples didn't degrade.

JEAN-CLAUDE MANUGUERRA - VIROLOGIST, INSTITUT PASTEUR

Now we are going to take a part of the virus sample. We'll use a part of it for the analysis, first we'll deactivate it so we can extract it from here. It's a sophisticated test but it works very simply, with a result which is easy to read, you see, two bright yellow samples to indicate the presence of traces of Ebola.

GIULIO VALESINI OFF VOICEOVER

Two confirmed cases, one negative, the number of tests to be carried out was falling. A month from the start, the epidemic was slowing.

JEAN-CLAUDE MANUGUERRA - VIROLOGIST, INSTITUT PASTEUR

In hindsight it's easy to say: "There are fewer than 200 cases", "fewer than 100 deaths", you never know how the situation might evolve.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

After a period of inactivity in the spring, Ebola took off again in June. Without understanding how, Oularé Bakary managed to survive.

OULARE BAKARY

I could see the dead bodies, so I started asking questions, I asked how long the ill had been there. Did they come with me? I was really worried. I was going to die, it was the end for me. I saw another sick person wetting themselves, losing blood, they had diarrhoea, they were vomiting blood. There were bodies ready to be buried. I was waiting for my time to come, it was the end for me. They tested me once, then again, they told me it was negative. I was so happy. I was not ill anymore!

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

In the case of Ebola, the accusation aimed at the WHO was that they moved too late. For months the only ones working in the field were those working for Médecins Sans Frontières.

NICOLETTA DENTICO - DIRECTOR, HEALTH INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

Ebola was another case in which the WHO admitted many weaknesses. A fund was created following the Ebola outbreak in 2015, this Contingency Fund which until now, funded by 18 of the 194 governments that are involved with and are part of the WHO, has collected 114 million dollars.

GIULIO VALESINI

In five years.

NICOLETTA DENTICO - DIRECTOR, HEALTH INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

In five years, so practically nothing, it's crumbs.

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN STUDIO

Because that's all it is in the end, just crumbs. That fund was established following the Ebola epidemic because the WHO needed to have the resources available to invest in the event of a health emergency, for that initial response which needs to be strong, immediate and determined, so as to ensure an epidemic doesn't turn into a pandemic. Well, from 2015 until now just 18 of the 194 WHO member states have contributed. And they've donated just 114 million. And during these weeks the WHO has allocated 9 million from that fund to the weakest health systems to help them tackle the Coronavirus emergency. Well, following the 2015 Ebola experience Bill Gates brought together, in Seattle, the cream of the scientific world and spoke, with an image of a virus behind him that's incredibly reminiscent of Covid-19, about the most predicted pandemic in history. He clearly had an issue with the world's countries, we already talked about this, but then we asked ourselves, who was he really angry at? And above all, Bill Gates, is he a genuine philanthropist?

BILL GATES – TED TALK, MARCH 2015

When I was a kid the disaster we worried about most was a nuclear war. That's why we had a barrel like this down in our basement, filled with cans of food and water. When the nuclear attack came, we were supposed to go downstairs, hunker down, and eat out of that barrel. Today the greatest risk of global catastrophe doesn't look like this. Instead, it looks like this. If anything kills over 10 million people in the next few decades, it's most likely to be a highly infectious virus rather than a war. Now, part of the reason for this is that we invested a huge amount in nuclear deterrents, but we actually invested very little in a system to stop an epidemic. We're not ready for the next epidemic. Let's look at Ebola, the issue wasn't having a system that didn't work, the issue was not having a system at all. We didn't have epidemiologists ready to go, to control the spread of the virus. The case reports came in on paper, there were delays putting them online and they were even inaccurate. Nobody looking at treatment approaches and diagnostics. A global failure. But it could have been much worse: Ebola does not spread through the air, and when the ill become contagious, they don't circulate, they're so sick that they're bedridden and it's pure luck that it didn't get into urban areas. So next time, we might not be so lucky and we might find ourselves with a virus where people feel well enough while they're infectious that they get on a plane or they go to a market. Like the Spanish Flu back in 1918 which led to

the deaths of over 30 million people. Today we have the technology to tackle an epidemic. With cell phones we can collect information and transmit it, with satellite maps we can see where people are moving. We've got the tools, but these tools need to be put into an overall global health system. The World Bank estimates that if we have a worldwide flu pandemic, global wealth will go down by around three trillion dollars and we'd have millions and millions of deaths. We need to be ready for this.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

We wonder who Bill Gates had a problem with, because if he was talking about the unpreparedness of the WHO and of those who make the political decisions, well he should also look at those who influence it, those who contribute to its financing. The contributions it received over the last two years totalled 5.6 billion dollars. But the fixed amounts paid by the countries make up for less than 20% of that total.

NICOLETTA DENTICO - DIRECTOR, HEALTH INNOVATION IN PRACTICE

These days, an organisation which controls more or less 20% of its own budget is, as you can imagine, unmanageable. The WHO has turned into a kind of service provider.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

80% of the budget is made up of voluntary contributions from countries and private individuals. They put the money in and decide what to spend it on.

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

Over the last 20 years the WHO has been privatised, Margaret Chan completed this process during her three-year mandate.

GIULIO VALESINI

But who benefitted from transforming the WHO into a de facto private agency?

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

Mainly the pharmaceutical industry. And the truth, not wishing to be too cynical, is that up until four months ago the industrialised countries wanted a WHO without much power, so as not to damage their industry

GIULIO VALESINI

In your opinion how strong is the influence, objectively, of the pharmaceutical companies within the World Health Organization today?

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

It's very, very, very, very strong, because in addition to being the donors, it just so happens that they are completely protected within the countries they're based in. This is not a recent thing, it's been like this for years.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

The primary contributor, the USA, announced just a few days ago that they are going to suspend funding.

DONALD TRUMP PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES - PRESS CONFERENCE 14 APRIL 2020

Today I'm instructing my administration to halt funding for the World Health Organization while a review is conducted to assess the World Health Organization's role in severely mismanaging and covering up the spread of Coronavirus. American tax payers provide between 400 and 500 million dollars per year to the WHO. In contrast China contributes around 40 million dollars a year, possibly even less.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

But the WHO's second largest donor after the USA is not a country, it's Bill Gates. His foundation gives the WHO more than half a billion dollars every two years. So he's practically the person who decides what the organisation's priorities are. For example investing in a cure for polio, instead of for malaria. The funds come from the family trust, which is where the profits from his investments in the health industry go: he has investments in pharmaceutical companies. Report discovered that Gates's Trust invested in health industry shares to the tune of around 320 million dollars. And if Gates, as a donor, were to influence what the WHO invests in, there would be a major conflict of interests.

ALFONSO SCARANO - INDEPENDENT ANALYST

The trust makes money, invests and generates the tonne of money that then goes to the foundation. It's significant amounts, we're talking over 5 billion dollars. And then the foundation donates that money.

GIULIO VALESINI

So it's practically not even a country, it's as if it was a superpower. As if it was actually the 195th member of the WHO.

ALFONSO SCARANO - INDEPENDENT ANALYST

But in reality here we've probably gone beyond the concept of a country. So he does what he wants.

GIULIO VALESINI

So you are saying that Bill Gates has effectively become the owner of the World Health Organization.

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

I'll give you an example of something extremely shocking that I saw when I was at the WHO. The Director General invited Bill Gates to the World Health Assembly. He was given 40 minutes to speak to the assembled Ministers of Health. Not one Minister of Health from anywhere in the world, whether it be France, Italy or the UK, gets more than five minutes to talk at the World Health Assembly. This man might have a lot of money but he's not an expert in public health. Bill Gates is killing the WHO and he's trying to demonstrate to the world that he's a great philanthropist and that he worries about the health of the human race.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

Gates is making a significant contribution to research into a vaccine and he has promised that it will be accessible to everyone. But considering his investments in the pharmaceutical industry will he be able to impose, let's say, an open patent?

ALFONSO SCARANO - INDEPENDENT ANALYST

Bill Gates was born with the concept of the patent etched on his brain, I mean he created a fortune via the concept of the patent, particularly through the idea of protecting capabilities and inventions.

GIULIO VALESINI

Do you think that the WHO can impose a more relaxed intellectual property regime on the pharmaceutical companies with respect to vaccines, so as to make the drug available for everyone at affordable prices?

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

Legally the WHO can't revoke a patent, but it can strongly recommend that all countries opt for the compulsory licence, a tool through which each country pays a symbolic amount to use someone else's patent. But they are not doing this.

GIULIO VALESINI VOICEOVER

However, German Velasquez is pursuing an even more courageous, more radical proposal.

GERMAN VELASQUEZ - SPECIAL ADVISOR ON POLICY AND HEALTH OF THE SOUTH CENTRE

We are asking the director of the World Trade Organization, the director of the WHO, Tedros, the director of the International Bureau of the World Intellectual Property Organization to sign, in front of the whole world during this pandemic, a declaration saying, "Nothing that's discovered will be patentable".

SIGFRIDO RANUCCI IN STUDIO

Good luck with that. But those who are first to produce the vaccine will be able to sit around the international table flexing their muscles, with the moral suasion of someone who has just won a war. But the vaccine will have to be accessible to everyone, both in terms of the number of doses and the price. But which is the path to follow? One that could be followed is that proposed by GAVI, an alliance involved in vaccinations and immunisations for the entire globe and which is financed, amongst other countries, by Norway, Italy, Japan, Great Britain and also by Bill Gates. It should take care of distributing the vaccine to the poorer parts of countries, between the poorer governments, but it has yet to express its opinion regarding the patent for a Covid-19 vaccine. Just as the WHO hasn't expressed its opinion. The WHO that's led by Tedros. Tedros who heads up an agency that has virtually become private. Because countries wanted it to be weaker in order to protect their pharmaceutical companies. So 80% of its funds are either from private donations or donations with strings attached. The number one, the major private contributor is Bill Gates. Over the last couple of years he's donated approximately half a billion dollars, the WHO's second largest contributor in absolute terms. More than a country, more than other countries. He also decides the policies and strategies of the WHO, decides whether to invest in a vaccination campaign against polio rather than one against malaria, which is responsible for more deaths. Now, he has said "I'm committed to producing a vaccine for Covid-19 and it will be accessible to all". Yes, but at what price? And then what about the patent, will it be a free patent? He who has built his fortune on patents? He takes the money from his family trust, puts it into his foundation and from the foundation it ends up with the WHO, but the money that goes into the trust, Report

has discovered, also comes from investments in the health industry. And we're talking about 323 million dollars in 2018, some of which was invested in major pharmaceutical companies, including those that produce vaccines: Novartis, Pfizer, Merck, Medtronic.

And of this, 237 million dollars was invested, at least up until a year ago, in the Walgreen Boots Alliance, the company which distributes drugs to half of the world's wholesale and retail companies. And, among other things, Bill Gates also signed an agreement, through Microsoft, to build and manage this company's data network. So, is it also to be used to gather information relating to prescriptions? To understand which drugs are the best sellers and therefore invest in those drugs? And there you go, the circle has been closed. More money in his Trust, which then goes into his foundation, he wears the hat of a philanthropist, he gives it away, saving on tax, to the WHO. He determines those health policies, the vaccination campaigns, or those pharmaceutical treatments, perhaps produced by those multinationals he has invested in. So, rather than a conflict of interest, it looks more like a vision of the world. Mr Gates, we take our hat off to you. But we firmly believe that the health of the population of this world deserves something better.