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WHO chief Tedros 'confident' of eventual pandemic treaty deal

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Summary

- Negotiations set to be extended
- Health officials voice frustration
- WHO annual assembly lasts until June 1

GENEVA, May 27 (Reuters) - The head of the World Health Organization on Monday voiced confidence that countries would one day reach a deal on a pandemic accord after failing to produce an agreement last week, although health officials warned it could take years.

Health officials have voiced frustration with the negotiations that have been dogged by lengthy discussions past midnight, last-minute shifts in



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Ministers from among the WHO's 194 member states are seeking to wrap up more than two years of negotiations on new rules for responding to pandemics during the May 27-June 1 World Health Assembly after COVID-19 killed millions.

Negotiators failed to produce a draft deal on Friday for formal approval by the assembly this week.



[1/4] Director-General of the World Health Organisation (WHO) Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus attends the World Health Assembly at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland, May 27, 2024. REUTERS/Denis... [Purchase Licensing Rights](#) [Read more](#)



"Of course, we all wish that we had been able to reach a consensus on the agreement in time for this health assembly, and cross the finish line," Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus said in his opening address.

"I remain confident that you still will, because where there is a will, there is a way. I know that there remains among you a common will to get this done."

A senior U.S. administration official said Washington remained committed to the process but estimated another 1-2 years of talks. "There's a lot of frustration," she said. A health diplomat said reforms to the process were being considered as well as an extension of between 5-24 months.

Negotiations are still ongoing for an update to existing health rules on outbreaks and negotiators say that a deal is close, including on a new tiered system of alerts following criticism the WHO was too slow to declare a COVID emergency.

Lawrence Gostin, a professor at Georgetown Law in Washington D.C. involved in the negotiations, said the outcome was a "shameful abdication of political leadership" but voiced confidence the reforms would pass this week.

"They have enormous potential value for making the world safer and more equitable," he told Reuters.

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