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Russia Against Investigating WHO, China Over Pandemic: Speaker

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Valentina Matvienko. **Council of the Federation**

Russia opposes investigations into the World Health Organization (WHO) and China in connection with their response to the deadly coronavirus pandemic, Russia's senate speaker Valentina Matviyenko told Interfax on Monday.

Her remarks come amid the United States' increasingly bitter spat with China and accusations that the WHO failed to contain the outbreak that has infected nearly 4.8 million people and killed more than 317,000. China, where the outbreak emerged late last year, has vehemently denied accusations of a cover-up, insisting it has always shared information with the WHO and other countries in a timely manner.

"Today, there's certainly no reason to perform a mock trial or any kinds of investigations [into the WHO] and destroy the useful things that have been accumulated for decades by mankind," Matviyenko said.

"Of course, Russia will oppose such actions," she was quoted as saying by Interfax.

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Matviyenko said Russia would also oppose investigations into China.

"China was the first to take the hit" of the pandemic this winter, the Russian senate speaker said. "Its competent and professional restrictive measures, a strict isolation regime and quarantine allowed it to manage, gain experience with coronavirus and gave other countries a respite of a month and a half."

Later Monday, U.S. President Donald Trump threatened to permanently freeze U.S. funding to the WHO and reconsider its membership unless "substantive improvements" were made within the next 30 days. Trump has accused the WHO of blindly taking the word of China, where the SARS-CoV-2 virus was first detected.

"They're a puppet of China, they're China-centric to put it nicer," he said earlier at the White House. "They gave us a lot of bad advice."

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus acknowledged shortcomings at a virtual assembly Monday and announced a review into the UN organization's virus response.

An EU resolution introduced at Monday's World Health Assembly, which is said to be backed by 122 countries including Russia, calls for an "impartial, independent and comprehensive" inquiry into the handling of the outbreak. It does not mention China.

AFP contributed reporting to this article.

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