



Speaker

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Global Responses to COVID-19 and Disease Control Methods in Central Asia

Dear colleagues and friends. My name is Kuban Abdymen from Kyrgyz Republic.

I am glad to participate in this videoconference and share my vision on the situation related to COVID-19 and will focus just in Central Asia. More than 70 million people live in the region across five countries.

With the onset of the pandemic worldwide, Central Asia also started registering those infected with the coronavirus, which led to a declaration of a state of emergency in three countries - Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan and Uzbekistan in mid-March, and the closing of borders for citizens of other countries. In the first two months, the situation was relatively stable and the number of cases did not grow very much - on average, 15-30 people per day. The healthcare system of these three states were able to manage the situation and patients were able to receive timely assistance. As a result, the death rate from COVID-19 was few people per day. Meanwhile, in two other countries in the region - Tajikistan and Turkmenistan - authorities did not take any measures. In Tajikistan, this happened in connection with the parliamentary elections, which took place in early March, but quarantine measures were introduced only at the end of April. In Turkmenistan, the authorities have not yet taken official measures against COVID-19. However, sanitary rules were established, requiring citizens to wear masks in all crowded places and outside.

Meanwhile, in the other three countries, the quarantine measures taken were eased in early June. This led to a sharp increase in the spread of COVID-19. Two countries, Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan, felt this especially strongly. During this time in Kyrgyzstan ten times as many people were diagnosed with the disease daily than during the quarantine in spring. In Kazakhstan, the number of cases has increased by more than 20 times. As a result, to date,

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the total number of cases in Kazakhstan has exceeded 105 thousand people, in Kyrgyzstan - more than 44 thousand people.

Meanwhile, in Uzbekistan, the number of detected patients grew more smoothly and to date their number did not exceed 40 thousand for several month and just recently reached 45 thousand. Unfortunately, the real figures in all countries can be worse.

In following first picture we can see all data related to COVID-19 in Kyrgyzstan. In the first picture you can see that the maximum number of patients fell on the second half of July, when the daily detected number of patients reached more than 1500. This lasted almost a month and reached a plateau at the end of August. At present time, the number of identified patients does not exceed 70-80 people per day. The total number of deaths reached 1060. Starting from July 20, patients with pneumonia were included in the patient count.

The second picture shows data for the CA countries. Where it can be seen that Kazakhstan and Kyrgyzstan count patients with pneumonia since July. Therefore, there was a leap in the schedule. Other countries are not yet doing this. In general, the situation with coronavirus in Central Asia is reaching a stabilization level. However, it is too early to speak about a decrease in the level of the disease.

What I want to underline - Lifting of quarantine measures resulted in:

1. Greater interaction between members of society, which caused a large migration within the country
2. A sharp increase in the number of citizens returning to their homeland, which also led to an increase in the number of cases
3. A sharp spread of the disease to all the internal regions of the countries. In Kyrgyzstan, one region held out for almost three months without a single patient. Unfortunately, it eventually caught up with all other regions in terms of the number of cases.
4. A noticeable increase in the number of deaths, even among those who were hospitalized.

A sharp spike in the growth of infected people revealed obvious miscalculations and weaknesses in the healthcare system, as well as the entire government:

1. The healthcare system of all countries has shown its lack of preparedness to fight a real

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pandemic, when the number of patients significantly exceeded the number of hospital beds.

2. The system of providing medicines and medical supplies could not withstand the sharply increased demand

At the same time, in the countries the ability to self-organize was demonstrated by public activists – in Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan.

1. In hospitals where there was a shortage of medical staff, volunteers came to provide assistance to doctors and nurses

2. Social activists delivered patients to hospitals, provided them with food

3. They delivered all necessary medical supplies, including oxygen bags, lung ventilators and medication.

4. Kyrgyzstani people abroad began to supply their homeland with ambulance cars, medicine and medical supplies, showing patriotism and thereby helping their country.

5. Additional healthcare facilities and hospitals began to function for those who needed help at any time

What we have at the moment:

1. The countries assessed the situation in time and made a number of correct decisions - the ministers of health of Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan were dismissed and more professional specialists were appointed in their place

2. By mid-August, the situation in the countries stabilized, the total number of cases began to decrease significantly, and the number of recovered patients increased, up to 80%, in Kyrgyzstan alone.

3. Fatalities - in Kazakhstan –1465 (excluding deaths from pneumonia), in Kyrgyzstan - 1060, in Uzbekistan - about 300, in Tajikistan – less than 100, in Turkmenistan –unknown.

In the last three countries, the indicators of official statistics do not describe the real picture, since data from remote regions of the country are not always taken into account.

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Conclusions:

All countries of the region are preparing for the possible second wave of COVID-19 with completely different ideas about the severity of the coronavirus. If Kyrgyzstan and Kazakhstan have learned a good enough lesson and are making efforts to prevent a recurrence of the crisis, while in Uzbekistan the number of cases has not even begun to decrease. This suggests that the country has not yet reached the peak of the spread, although all measures are being taken to stop the spread of infection.

In general, the region suffered economically the most. The decline in the economies of the region's countries can reach 6-10%, which will noticeably affect the living standards of the 70 million people living here.

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