it had spread massively to all 34 provinces of China. The

number of confirmed cases suddenly increased, with

thousands of new cases diagnosed daily during late

January’’. On 30 January, the WHO declared the novel

coronavirus outbreak a public health emergency of inter-

national concern'®. On 11 February, the International

Committee on Taxonomy of Viruses named the novel

coronavirus ‘SARS-CoV-2; and the WHO named the

disease ‘COVID-19’ (REF."’).

The outbreak of COVID-19 in China reached an

epidemic peak in February. According to the National

Health Commission of China, the total number of

cases continued to rise sharply in early February at an

average rate of more than 3,000 newly confirmed cases

per day. To control COVID-19, China implemented

unprecedentedly strict public health measures. The city

of Wuhan was shut down on 23 January, and all travel

and transportation connecting the city was blocked.

n the following couple of weeks, all outdoor activities

and gatherings were restricted, and public facilities were

closed in most cities as well as in countryside'\*. Owing to

hese measures, the daily number of new cases in China

started to decrease steadily”.

However, despite the declining trend in China, the

international spread of COVID-19 accelerated from late

February. Large clusters of infection have been reported

from an increasing number of countries!\*. The high

ransmission efficiency of SARS-CoV-2 and the abun-

dance of international travel enabled rapid worldwide

spread of COVID-19. On 11 March 2020, the WHO

officially characterized the global COVID-19 out-

break as a pandemic”’. Since March, while COVID-19

in China has become effectively controlled, the case

numbers in Europe, the USA and other regions have

jumped sharply. According to the COVID-19 dash-

board of the Center for System Science and Engineering

at Johns Hopkins University, as of 11 August 2020,