

German Bundestag

19th electoral term

Decision

At its 163rd sitting, held on 28 May 2020, the Bundestag, acting on the basis of Bundestag printed paper 19/19491, adopted the following decision:

Expanding commitment to global health – exercising Germany’s responsibility in all policy areas

I. The German Bundestag notes:

1. Until recently, public opinion in Germany perceived health policy mainly as a national task. Now, however, it is becoming clear that the great challenges threatening human health here and across the globe can no longer be met with national resources alone. The emergence of the SARS-CoV-2 Coronavirus in China at the end of 2019 and its spread to practically the entire world by the end of March 2020 with no specific means of treatment, no available vaccine yet and contagion still running through the whole population has now created a scenario that had only ever been encountered in the form of abstract scientific crisis scenarios.

Coming to grips with global health in a politically focused manner is not only an important contribution to strategic and future-oriented prevention but also an essential means of practical action to tackle a crisis of unprecedented dimensions.

Back in 2019, the World Health Organization (WHO) listed the ten greatest threats to global health, which included the threat of a global influenza pandemic, weak primary care, antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and air pollution and climate change. In an ever more interlinked and mobile world, the key factors for healthy lives are increasingly determined on a global scale. Throughout the world, people’s health depends on their own lifestyles, the shape of social security systems, their living conditions, effective health promotion and the prevention and treatment of disease but also on the state of the environment and fair trading conditions. The closer and more numerous that cross-border social and economic ties become, the greater the importance attaching to international agreements and to well-coordinated global health governance. Besides Germany’s humanitarian responsibility to press globally for healthy living conditions, such efforts also contribute to national health protection, for example by influencing the course of infections or combating resistance to antibiotics.

2. Health is a global public asset and a human right which, according to Article 25 of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, must be accessible to everyone. The WHO, as a specialised agency of the United Nations, has a mandate from the international community to assist all peoples in attaining the best possible state of health. It is the only internationally legitimised authority with the power to set health standards. It must be strengthened in that role and

funded sufficiently to enable it to meet the growing challenges.

3. In 2015, the United Nations adopted the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. Each and every one of the 17 Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) that are formulated in that document relates more or less evidently to the subject of health. It is SDG 3, however – *Ensure healthy lives and promote well-being for all at all ages* – that focuses explicitly on health. In the pursuit of that goal lies the opportunity to reduce the extreme global deficits in terms of the risks and prevalence of disease and the chances of survival. Federal Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel, together with Prime Minister Erna Solberg of Norway and President Nana Akufo-Addo of Ghana, called on the WHO and other international organisations in April 2018 to draw up a plan for the achievement of that goal. This Global Action Plan was presented by the Director-General of the WHO, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, together with eleven other organisations, on 23 September 2019 on the fringe of the United Nations High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage (UN HLM-UHC) in New York. It provides the international community with a set of planned measures for actually achieving the goal. Germany must make every effort to support and urge its sustained implementation. To this end, the WHO recommends that 0.1% of gross domestic product be devoted to health-related official development assistance (ODA).
4. Not only in this context but also in the international G7 and G20 forums, the Federal Government has been strongly committed to global health in recent years. The scientific community, other countries and international organisations ascribe a leading role to Germany in this field. In the coalition agreement, the CDU, the CSU and the SPD undertook to attach even greater weight to global health to enable Germany to fulfil its responsibility even more effectively. The updating of the Federal Government's global health policy strategy in particular is intended to underline this commitment. This process affords an opportunity to focus government action consistently on the protection and promotion of both national and global health and to set new priorities in the light of new challenges. The associated broad-based political debate has brought many governmental and non-governmental actors together in partnership. The independent cooperation network Global Health Hub Germany, which the Federal Ministry of Health established in February 2019 and is supporting with start-up funding until 2021, provides the first joint platform for the work of various non-governmental players in this field.
5. Increasing importance attaches to health as a key component of and prerequisite for sustainable social and economic development. Health care in many developing and newly industrialised countries has therefore become a focal point for international bodies. The most effective way of promoting health on a long-term basis is to invest in universal health coverage (UHC). UHC means that all sections of the population have barrier-free, non-discriminatory access to all necessary and appropriate high-quality health services, regardless of income. To this end, the Federal Government, especially through its development cooperation, prioritises global support for the establishment of universal health coverage. Particular importance attaches in this context to healthcare specialists. In many cases, there is insufficient investment in staff training, development and retention. Qualified health carers are often unable to find work because of the limited absorption capacity of local labour markets and so remain underemployed or unemployed.
Only robust and needs-driven health systems can maintain standard care in times of crisis. The Ebola outbreaks in West Africa and more recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, which have highlighted the interaction between health and security, and the COVID-19 pandemic that is currently raging have been primarily responsible for focusing the attention of the international community

on the subjects of epidemic and pandemic prevention and health-crisis management. Newly emerging infectious diseases are often attributable to mutual transmission between animals and humans, intensified food production or the increase in international trade and travel. Many national health systems are underprepared or even completely unprepared for these diseases and for climate change and its impact on the environment. That is why it is necessary, in the spirit of the interdisciplinary One Health approach, to engage in holistic examination of the complex interconnections between human and animal health and environmental factors.

6. Another key building block in the effort to reduce the global prevalence of disease is research into effective and affordable medicines and therapies and applied social and healthcare research. Such interdisciplinary research must be supported in the framework of national and international initiatives so as to remedy the present deficits in the development of new active substances and in access to medicinal products and medical procedures.
7. One of the Federal Government's priorities is the provision of support for product-development partnerships (PDPs). PDPs develop new effective and affordable vaccines, medicines and diagnostic tests for diseases in cases where the commercial market for such products is very limited. Representatives of academic institutes, public research establishments, non-governmental organisations, charitable foundations and researching pharmaceutical companies work together in these partnerships. In this way, costs and risks are split many ways, making it possible for new products to be developed and supplied at prices that are affordable, especially for people in developing and newly industrialised countries.
8. Planning processes must focus more sharply on the strains that are already apparent on the health of individuals, on specific sections of the population and, more generally, on entire health systems, for health is a human right, and when there is no access to basic needs such as food, primary health care and schooling, people often feel compelled to leave their native countries. The dramatic rise in non-communicable diseases (NCDs), moreover, is also confronting health systems with formidable challenges, not only in industrialised nations but throughout the world. There are shortages of doctors and other health workers who are trained in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of these diseases, sufficient supplies of appropriate medicines are not available, and there is a lack of suitable regional diagnostic and treatment facilities.

The Federal Government focuses special attention on the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights. Self-determined family planning is an essential element of support for women and influences not only the health but also the social and economic status of women worldwide. Improving access to sexual and reproductive health care contributes significantly to the reduction of maternal mortality and to lower newborn and infant mortality rates and enables women to make their own family-planning decisions. This in turn increases women's opportunities for education and for equal access to the job market and gives them greater scope to plan their own lives. Particularly in times of crisis, women's access to elementary sexual and reproductive health services is more severely restricted; two thirds of the global cases of maternal mortality occur in such circumstances.

II. The German Bundestag welcomes

1. the fact that the Federal Government is aware of this growing responsibility for

global health, is continuing to press for the inclusion of health-related items on the G7 and G20 agendas, is using its forthcoming presidency of the Council of the EU to launch targeted initiatives and is working hard on an update of its global health strategy;

2. Germany's strong financial commitment to the WHO as the provider of the fourth-largest assessed contributions and the largest donor of voluntary contributions, to other UN agencies such as the Children's Fund UNICEF, UNAIDS, the UN Population Fund UNPFA and the GPEI, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative, and to other multi-stakeholder initiatives such as Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM) and Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, which contribute, with the aid of innovative market-shaping mechanisms, for instance, to the availability of low-priced medicines and other health products in developing countries;
3. the Federal Government's commitment to achieving the official development assistance (ODA) target of 0.7% of gross domestic product;
4. the Federal Government's vigorous support for the achievement of the SDGs and of universal health coverage (UHC) through the reinforcement of healthcare systems throughout the world, especially by means of development cooperation;
5. the Federal Government's commitment to checking the global spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and its efforts to show solidarity with our partner countries and to assist them and make treatment capacity available to them as resources permit; in addition, the Bundestag welcomes the Federal Government's commitment to the fight against the Ebola epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and neighbouring countries and to global efforts to combat epidemics and prevent pandemics, especially in Africa, as well as its support for the WHO Contingency Fund for Emergencies and the World Bank's Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility Emergency Fund;
6. the establishment and repeated deployment of the German Epidemic Preparedness Team (SEEG); the team comprises experts from the German Agency for International Cooperation (GIZ), the Bernhard Nocht Institute for Tropical Medicine and the Robert Koch Institute; since 2016 it has been assisting and advising developing countries in matters of diagnosis and prevention to help them combat dangerous infectious diseases such as Lassa fever, Ebola and now Covid-19;
7. the Federal Government's commitment to the promotion of science, research and strategic initiatives designed to ensure fair global access to medicinal products and to initiatives such as the multilateral Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI), which the Federal Government is helping to fund and which promotes the development of vaccines against infectious diseases, the DNDi (Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative), which provides new means of treating neglected diseases, and GARDP, the Global Antibiotic Research and Development Partnership, which promotes the development of new antibiotics;
8. the establishment of the Global Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Development Hub (Global AMR R&D Hub) as well as the Federal Government's efforts, consistent with the One Health approach, to support the fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and the prevention of epidemics by means of linkage between human, animal and environmental health, as exemplified by the creation of the One Health Research, Education and Outreach Centre for Africa in Nairobi;
9. the Federal Government's financial and political commitment to the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) worldwide, with Germany being one of the top five donors, thanks to its support for the Global Financing Facility (GFF), its increased financial contributions to the United Nations Population Fund (UNPFA), bilateral development cooperation and active support

of the She Decides movement.

III. The German Bundestag calls on the Federal Government,

within the scope of the available budgetary funds,

1. to pursue the ‘Health in all Policies’ approach even more systematically; to this end, interdepartmental exchanges on the subject of global health should be intensified and established as a permanent fixture; this applies especially to policies in areas such as agriculture, the environment, education, research and external trade which have not yet been associated visibly enough with global health; in this way, healthy everyday lives can be created for everyone; the subject of global health should therefore be regularly discussed by the State Secretaries in the framework of a *jour fixe*;
2. to present without delay an ambitious global health policy strategy and to make regular progress reports to the Bundestag; interdepartmental cooperation is the key to ensuring coherent government action;
3. to integrate that strategy fully into the SDG process and to press vigorously for the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 3 and all health-related SDGs in Germany.

Internationally, the Federal Government should press for the implementation of the Global Action Plan for Healthy Lives and Well-being for All; to this end, efforts should be stepped up to initiate the production of a regular activity report by all participating international organisations with a view to ensuring the successful implementation of the plan; at the same time, Germany should act through the boards of the participating international organisations to expedite and follow up the implementation of the plan in the global framework and in partner countries;

4. to continue to pursue vigorously the achievement of the 0.7% ODA target;
5. to ensure that the strengthening of health systems in developing countries remains a priority of development cooperation;
6. to press internationally, in the G7 and G20 frameworks, for an increase in assessed contributions (ACs) to the WHO; the aim, however, must always be consistent action on the part of all donors, which could be demonstrated by their willingness to accept an increase in the assessed contributions; an increase in voluntary contributions to the WHO or, better still, in core voluntary contributions (CVCs) would be a step in this direction and might serve as an inspiring example;
7. to make use of and nurture available expertise in Germany by investing in health research, clinical studies and translation processes, by providing support for resource acquisition and for interdisciplinary and transdisciplinary networks, by developing the academic landscape in such a way as to promote medical innovation transfer, particularly in application-focused health services research and in the social sciences and humanities, by supporting young researchers and creating new funding options and by further developing PDPs and antibiotics research;
8. to anchor the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) firmly as an instrument with an effective focus on issues relating to the development of access to and rapid availability of vaccines against novel pathogens and to ensure that CEPI-funded vaccines are affordable and accessible;
9. to promote and develop the worldwide deployment of experts for measures of international public health protection and pandemic prevention in a One Health

approach, to continue monitoring their efforts in response to global health crises and to broaden their skills to include still more aspects of crisis prevention and after-care, because the reinforcement of needs-based health systems can prevent crises as well as quickly and effectively containing them; such efforts also include worldwide support for the establishment of the capacities to combat and prevent the spread of disease, as called for in the WHO International Health Regulations of 2005;

10. besides efforts to combat infectious diseases, to focus even more sharply than hitherto on non-communicable diseases (NCDs) and to support potential cooperative ventures between German and partner bodies in the health sector in the relevant countries and their use as models;
11. to use the German presidency of the Council of the EU in 2020 (Horizon Europe, the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) programmes, trade policy, etc.) to enhance the visibility and cohesion of the EU in the field of global health policy; in association with the preceding and succeeding Presidencies, the Federal Government should pursue the updating of the Council conclusions on the role of the EU in global health and reaffirm the call for the creation of an EU global health coordinator;
12. to help establish the subject of global health diplomacy on a firmer footing in strategically important partner countries and regions, examining, for instance, whether ‘global health ambassadors’ should be created; in addition, strategic partnerships in the realm of global health should be developed and reinforced;
13. to do even more to support innovations in the areas of climate action, environmental technology, sustainable chemistry and digital health technology in Germany and make them deployable in developing and newly industrialised countries, to establish a climate-resilient and climate-neutral health policy as a benchmark as well as urging Germany’s international partners to pursue such policies and, at the same time, to ensure, by means of innovations, investments and information, that the environmental footprint of pharmaceutical production is minimised and that the environmental impact of medicinal products is reduced;
14. to follow, in both global and national health policy, the recommendations made in the political declaration adopted at the UN High-Level Meeting on Universal Health Coverage; the aim must be to enable people throughout the world, regardless of their individual incomes, to enjoy universal high-quality health care in the event of illness; at the same time, efforts should be intensified nationally and internationally to stand up for sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) and for the human right to health; promotion of the national and global involvement of civil society has a key role to play in this respect;
15. to support the WHO in its ongoing efforts to develop research designed to obtain baseline data on universal health coverage, broken down by age, place of residence, socio-economic status, sex, disabilities, etc., so that key priorities such as health funding and social security, the establishment of sustainable and robust health systems and better conditions for employees in the health services can be clearly specified for each of the 194 WHO member states;
16. to develop a coordinated position with Germany’s international partners for the global promotion of access to medicinal products and their proper use, especially for disadvantaged sections of the population, and to establish transparency regarding the part played by the public authorities in the development of each medicinal product;
17. to test new incentive schemes, including those targeting the investment propensity of industry, and to continue developing existing incentive schemes; this applies especially to German research activities relating to neglected tropical

diseases (NTDs), which are relatively modest in global terms; the same applies to invasive fungal infections, which have hitherto commanded limited attention; the Federal Government's efforts to combat NTDs in the framework of development cooperation should be integrated into measures to support the establishment of universal health coverage (UHC);

18. to continue the German Antibiotics Resistance Strategy (DART 2020), which was jointly published in 2015 by the Federal Ministries of Health, of Food and Agriculture and of Education and Research, and to further perpetuate its efforts in the fight against antimicrobial resistance (AMR) in accordance with the One Health approach; in addition, the Federal Government should continue to support the establishment of the Global Antimicrobial Resistance Research and Development Hub (Global AMR R&D Hub).