

WELCOME MESSAGES 2021

HIGH PATRONS OF THE WORLD HEALTH SUMMIT



The COVID-19 pandemic continues to throw up significant challenges, such as new variants of the virus or the syndrome known as long COVID, which we can only overcome together.

I am therefore delighted that in 2021 the World Health Summit is once again bringing together experts working in science, politics, non-governmental organisations and civil society around the world. I would like to bid you all a very warm welcome to Berlin! This is an opportunity for you to share new findings and discuss what may be needed to efficiently prevent and fight pandemics on a global scale. I am extremely grateful for this, because the COVID-19 pandemic is not yet over.

However, we have achieved a great deal, not least thanks to worldwide

cooperation. Multiple effective vaccines have been developed and produced in record time. I am delighted that BioNTech, a German company, was able to contribute to this success. Progress such as this builds in part on research funding provided by the German Government over many years.

Vaccines must be accessible to everyone around the world. This is the only way to end the pandemic. The Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator—or ACT-Accelerator—with its vaccine platform COVAX is the foremost global initiative working to make this happen. It is the result of a commitment by the G20 and has been supported by the German Government from the beginning. With a contribution of 2.2 billion euro, Germany is the second-largest donor. We will only be able to achieve lasting success through multilateral action and international solidarity.

This pandemic will not be the last health crisis. And so we must discuss our experiences with one another, work together to draw lessons from them, and judiciously pool our resources to ensure that

we are as well-equipped as possible for future outbreaks of infectious diseases. Digitalisation has an important part to play. If we link up health data more effectively, we can make it easier to carry out clinical research across multiple locations, ultimately improving patient care. From artificial intelligence that can help analyse medical imaging, to digital applications that enable access to medical care even in remote areas, new possibilities to continue improving global health are constantly emerging.

The World Health Summit is a forum for you to engage with these issues which are so crucial to our future. Thank you very much for everything you do. I hope that you enjoy many enriching discussions at this Summit.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read 'Angela Merkel'.

Angela Merkel
Chancellor of the
Federal Republic of Germany

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The Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany and I have been Patrons of the World Health Summit (WHS) since its inception in 2009. As we continue this rich tradition of Patronage along with the President of the European Commission and the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), the importance of the WHS could not be clearer this year. By bringing together leaders from academia, government, industry, international organizations, science and medicine to tackle the multitude of issues posed by COVID-19, we hope to build a healthier future for humanity.

While physical attendance of this year's summit has been curtailed due to pandemic restrictions, the opportunity for many more of the best and brightest to attend

virtually provides an unparalleled opportunity. The chance to listen, debate, exchange ideas and inspire. In this light, my thoughts turn to Chancellor Angela Merkel, whose leadership and willingness to act for the common good based on a truly European vision will continue to inspire all of us. I also wish to thank Professor Detlev Ganten for his exceptional chairmanship of the WHS since its creation twelve years ago and welcome Professor Axel Pries to this pivotal role.

The central topics of this 13th annual World Health Summit highlight the complexities and challenges that we must collectively address to alleviate inequalities in access to health care and treatment, harness science and technology and ensure that we are adequately prepared to deal with any future health crisis. The European Union has a key role to play, and these issues will naturally be at the heart of the French Presidency of the Council of the European Union.

The pandemic has once again shown the extent to which international solidarity is central to global health. It is in this spirit of

solidarity that France, along with the European Commission, the WHO and the Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation, launched the "Access to COVID-19 Tools (ACT) Accelerator" in April 2020. By supporting the equitable distribution of tests, treatments and vaccines across the globe with a focus on strengthening health systems, ACT-A provides a vital mechanism to improve global access to the tools required to treat the pandemic.

While much remains to be done to deliver on the promise of global access, it was essential for these governments and organizations to come together to combat an unprecedented global health crisis. It also demonstrated the importance for one organization to carry legitimate global leadership: the World Health Organization must be the compass for our global health network. This organization must be robust in time of crisis, agile enough to react in emergencies and fully transparent to inspire confidence. France supports the strengthening of the WHO in its normative role and as facilitator in the preparation and response to future health crises. Achieving

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these goals also requires improvements to the financing of the WHO to make it more sustainable and predictable. Additionally, stronger governance of our pandemic response mechanisms, with better coordinated financing and clearer procedures will ensure fast and equitable access to response tools.

The European Union has played a central role in the international response to Covid and will continue to do so, by building a genuine “European Health Union”. With common stocks of masks and tests, coordinated purchasing capacities for prevention, treatments and vaccines, shared plans for the prevention of epidemics, common methods for identifying cases, and with a coordinated “Team Europe” approach to solidarity, this ambition highlights our shared values, that transcend European internal borders.

The pandemic has once again shown that well-trained human resources in health save lives. France is proud to host the WHO Academy in Lyon, which will train health and other public officials in matters of global health. This

is an important step towards building healthy societies and economies and paving the way towards achieving our health-related Sustainable Development Goals.

France is also particularly committed to address the impact of the Covid pandemic on mental health. Earlier this year on October 5th & 6th, France hosted the world summit on mental health. This event was key to strengthen international mobilisation for mental health, promote the respect of patients’ rights and highlight innovative international protocols. It is clear that there is no health without mental health.

The current health crisis has finally reminded us that human health is inseparable from animal and environmental health. This “One Health” approach must guide our efforts to be better prepared for future pandemics. We have started to make progress on this. Along with Germany and the Tripartite collaboration (WHO, OIE, FAO), we launched the One Health High Level Expert Panel (OHHLEP) last November during the Paris Peace Forum. The panel is now set to

provide advice to international organisations and global leaders by providing evidence-based information.

This leads to a subject particularly important to me. The current pandemic, with its trail of misinformation, has shown us the importance of science and robust health systems. The World Health Summit demonstrates the essential role of scientific communities to decision-making on global health. Access to scientific data, reliable information and training for the general public and health workers are key in the fight against the pandemic. They will remain crucial to face the shocks we could still experience in the years and decades to come.

I wish to all participants a fruitful Summit, with a renewed ambition to ensure the fundamental right to health for all.



Emmanuel Macron

President of the Republic of France

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This year's World Health Summit coincides with a crucial yet almost forgotten anniversary. Seventy-five years ago, the idea of a "right to health" was formulated in the Constitution of the World Health Organization. It was a first in the history of humanity. Health was also recognised as a global public good, because "unequal development in different countries in the promotion of health and control of disease is a common danger".

We still have a long way to go. Yet, three quarters of a century later, the world realises the truth in these words like never before. The COVID-19 pandemic has shown how crucial it is to invest in quality healthcare and prevention all across the world. Let us build on this new awareness, and open a new chapter in the history of global public health—where we all join forces and everyone takes responsibility.

In the run-up to the World Health Summit, I would like to focus on three topics on the Summit's agenda.

First, vaccine equity. Team Europe—the European Union and its Member States, together—have contributed 3 billion euros to COVAX and team Europe has committed to donating up to 500 million doses of vaccines till mid 2022 for vulnerable countries. And every second dose of vaccine produced in Europe is shipped abroad to the rest of the world. We are a world leader in this regard. However, the global pace of vaccine donations is still too slow. While developed nations must step up their contribution, we must also work to help low- and middle-income countries increase their manufacturing capacities. Team Europe will invest one billion euro by the end of the year to ramp up Africa's vaccine production capacity, with a focus on mRNA technology. It is a contribution in the fight against the pandemic, and an important step towards vaccine equity. Let us use the Summit to discuss the way forward, together.

Second, preparedness. After the first Sars outbreak, Mers and H1N1—the world was still caught off guard by COVID-19. This shall never happen again. Here in Europe, we have just delivered on our promise to launch a European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority, HERA for short. And earlier this year we have brought global leaders together and agreed on the Rome Declaration on preparedness against health threats. It is a set of clear principles, and how would like to discuss how to turn them into reality all over the world.

Third, Europe's role in the world. The European Union is a community of countries who have agreed on joining forces for the common good. In these two years, we have experimented a wealth of creative solutions for our public health: on vaccine sharing, on joint procurement of protective equipment and medicines, on ramping up the manufacturing of pharmaceutical products, on preparedness, let alone with the creation of the European Health Union. We are willing to share this experience with the world, and to learn from others who have also explored new solutions.

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The World Health Summit will be the perfect platform for this. As the right to health turns 75, we can all contribute to making it a truly universal human right.



Ursula von der Leyen

President of the
European Commission



The COVID-19 pandemic is a powerful demonstration that when health is at risk, everything is at risk.

The pandemic has exposed the consequences of years of underinvestment in public health and pandemic preparedness, even in countries with some of the most advanced medical systems.

Even as we respond to the threat of COVID-19, we must address the underlying vulnerabilities and structural inequalities that put so many people at risk. This is important not only for this pandemic, but for future health crises and persistent health threats including communicable and non-communicable diseases and environmental challenges such as pollution and climate change.

Understanding and addressing the inequalities and inequities that make some communities so much

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more vulnerable than others is at the heart of WHO's mission and at the heart of public health.

Every year, WHO supports countries to strengthen health policy on a vast range of issues, from mental health to maternal care, nutrition to infectious diseases, water and sanitation to air pollution, while also responding to dozens of health emergencies around the world.

But no single institution can tackle these global challenges alone. And no single country can take on a pandemic by itself. The lack of sharing of data and information has hobbled the global response. Now, vaccine inequity, with more than 75% of doses going to high and upper-middle income countries, is hampering our ability to bring the pandemic to an end.

There have been several reviews of the global response to the COVID-19 pandemic, and of WHO's performance. Four consistent themes emerge that demand urgent action.

First, we need better global governance that is inclusive, equitable and accountable, including a legally-binding international agreement on pandemic preparedness and

response. This will be the subject of a Special Session of the World Health Assembly in November of this year.

Second, we need better financing for national and global preparedness and response, using existing international financial institutions, rather than creating new structures that would lead to further fragmentation.

Third, we need better systems and tools to prevent, prepare for, detect and respond rapidly to outbreaks with epidemic and pandemic potential, such as the new WHO Hub for Epidemic and Pandemic Intelligence in Berlin, which I was honoured to open with Chancellor Angela Merkel in September of this year.

And fourth, we need a strengthened, empowered and sustainably financed WHO at the centre of the global health architecture. With 194 Member States and 152 country offices, WHO has a unique global mandate, unique global reach and unique global legitimacy.

In the coming months and years, other crises will demand our attention, and distract us from

the urgency of taking action now. If the world continues down the same path, it will continue to get the same result, which is a world that is less healthy, less safe and less fair.

Although the pandemic has robbed us of so much, it also gives us a unique opportunity to make real and lasting change for a healthier, safer and fairer future.

The World Health Summit is an essential forum for the high-level discussions we need to move towards that future. As a member of the World Health Summit's founding committee, I'm delighted to see how every year, it becomes an increasingly important venue for bringing together thought leaders and high-level decision makers to forge a consensus for how to address the most pressing challenges in global health.



Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus
Director-General of the
World Health Organization (WHO)