

# Inhalt

*Translation*

## Speech by Federal Chancellor Dr Angela Merkel at the WHO Global Evidence-to-Policy (E2P) Summit on 15 November 2021 (video conference)

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Angela Merkel

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Director-General, Tedros,

Michelle Bachelet,

Ban Ki-moon,

Ms Swaminathan,

Ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much, Tedros, for inviting me to speak here at the WHO Global Evidence-to-Policy Summit.

When an outbreak of disease evolves to an epidemic and then to a pandemic, that is yet another good reason to seek the advice of scientists. What kind of pathogen are we dealing with here? What needs to be done – at local, national and global level – to stop the spread of infection? How can findings, and later also effective remedies, be shared as quickly as possible?

In late 2019 and early 2020, we knew very little about the SARS-CoV-2 pathogen. Coronaviruses, however, were not entirely unknown. Research has been going on into these in Germany since 2006. However, it became clear once again just how important international networking in health research is. I am grateful to all teams of experts around the world who shared their knowledge at an incredible rate so as to decode the SARS-CoV-2 virus. A first diagnostic PCR test was available as early as mid-January 2020. And safe, effective vaccines were successfully developed in less than a year. That was a milestone in managing the pandemic. As Chancellor of the Federal Republic of Germany, of course, I am pleased that experts from Germany played a part here.

As important as it is for scientists to have good networks, they also need a good rapport with politicians. After all, the priority is to ensure adequate national and international support for research. Especially when the health of each and every one of us is at stake, advances in research should and must be worth that much to us. Pledges of such support must be reliable.

Unfortunately, though, not every country has the necessary research capacities. In light of this, the importance of the global ACT Accelerator initiative and its vaccine platform COVAX becomes clear: on the one hand, we provided funding for research into vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics and, on the other, we made vaccines available to poorer countries, too. Moreover, the G20 states have committed to greatly improving global access to urgently needed vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics. So we are getting closer to the target recommended by WHO of vaccinating at least 40 percent of the population of every country by the end of 2021 and at least 70 percent by mid-2022. In the medium and long term, we must continue our efforts to see vaccines being produced not only in industrial countries, but also, for example, in African states.

There is no doubt that we will be faced again and again with new health challenges in future, and so even a modern healthcare system like Germany's needs constant development. For example, we quickly noticed in the pandemic how important it is to improve our healthcare reporting system – from doctors' practices, laboratories and health offices to the Robert Koch Institute, our central institution for disease monitoring and prevention.

There can be no doubt that digitisation plays an important role in gathering a comprehensive picture of infection rates. Joined up information and as precise an overview as possible are crucial for optimising treatment and prevention methods, but also for political decision making. For me, it has always been and it remains very important to get information and advice from experts in the fields of infectious disease, immunology and the health sector in general, as well as in the field of ethics. Ultimately, successful management of the pandemic, which is a task for the whole of society, also needs an appropriate political framework.

In order to shed more light on current and future infection developments and to find the correct responses, we need appropriate platforms for exchange between science and politics and of course also for exchange within the scientific community – not only at national, but also at international level. Particularly when it comes to investigating the origins of new epidemics, I think it is right that we improve our position. So I am pleased at the establishment of SAGO, the WHO Scientific Advisory Group for the Origins of Novel Pathogens, a new group of researchers working together over the long term. Their task will be to advise WHO on the appearance of new or novel pathogens. This will help politicians to gain earlier information about pathogens that are possibly of concern and thus to react more quickly.

The basis for this information and advice is data from the environmental, wildlife, geographical, sociological and not least, of course, health sectors. The interdisciplinary and international collection, tracking and analysis of these data is no easy task. And so I am all the more pleased that, with the WHO Hub for Pandemic and Epidemic Intelligence in Berlin, we are creating a new space where data to prevent further pandemics and epidemics can be analysed and the necessary instruments developed and tested. Particularly with the help of artificial intelligence, new connections can be found in datasets, and these can be further

researched. The WHO Hub in Berlin will use these technical possibilities and share the findings with all states. This will enable health risks to be identified more quickly and more efficiently, and will give policymakers an important foundation on which to base decisions.

Allow me to close by summarising in three points what I regard as the fundamental priorities. Firstly, we should work to enhance cooperation and connectivity – in science, in politics and between science and politics. Secondly, we need efficient, functioning structures. To this end, WHO funding needs to be placed on a reliable footing. After all, as a coordinating agency, WHO plays a central role in the global health architecture. In addition, the mandates of all organisations and actors in global health should be clearly coordinated. Thirdly, we must further strengthen the trust that is indispensable for successful cooperation.

Pandemics know no national borders. Irrespective of all national efforts, joint challenges like this can only be overcome if we all act together. Rather than acting alone, we have a far better chance of successfully tackling the horrors of pandemics if we join forces. The current pandemic with its disastrous health and economic consequences should be a lesson to us. We should build up networks, structures and trust – in other words, create conditions that allow us and future generations to respond faster and better to health risks. We would be well advised to set forth specific measures for enhanced prevention, early detection and response in a binding manner in a pandemic treaty or other legal instrument.

There is certainly plenty to talk about. So I wish you fruitful discussions here at this Summit. And not least of all, I thank you most sincerely for your commitment.

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