

WELCOME MESSAGES

HIGH PATRONS OF THE WORLD HEALTH SUMMIT 2023



I am delighted that so many international experts have come together again this year for this important Summit meeting in Berlin to inject fresh impetus into global health policy.

Pandemic preparedness, international coordination, streamlined processes, access to data, fair and equal access to vaccines and resilient health systems are all topics on which we need to cooperate even more closely. The World Health Summit provides a tremendous opportunity here.

It is important that we react more quickly to global health crises so that we can preempt risks together and identify potential dangers at an early stage. This is what we are going to focus on as we invest more in prevention and pandemic response.

We are thus working with our international partners on a pandemic

accord within the framework of the WHO. The accord should address both prevention and response in equal measure. Only if we consider humans, animals and the environment holistically will we be able to prevent pandemics and to equip ourselves to counter them.

To that end, we are strengthening research and development so that we can better understand transmission, reservoirs and vulnerabilities, and recognise dangers earlier.

Furthermore we want to strengthen healthcare systems in particular in low- or middle-income countries. We are thus supporting the establishment of more effective, self-financed systems. This opens the way for comprehensive treatment of disease but also for prevention, vaccines, and mother-child health.

During the pandemic, there was less of a focus on researching, diagnosing and treating tropical diseases. Other diseases, above all diseases affecting people living in poverty, were also neglected. The most recent WHO Global Tuberculosis Report confirms that TB was diagnosed less, that treatments were restricted and that infections actually increased during

the pandemic. This shows how important it is that we use findings and resources to prevent and combat all diseases. By way of example, mRNA technology can also accelerate our efforts to combat other diseases such as malaria or various cancers.

Forums such as the WHS remain indispensable for exchange on such matters. The Summit brings together a wide range of views and provides an environment for open discussions. You are thus laying the foundation for political decisions based on knowledge and good sense. When disinformation campaigns threaten to discredit research findings, help can be found by engaging in scientific dialogue and by pooling expertise. The WHS and you as its participants embody both these elements.

I hope you have a successful and fruitful time with stimulating discussions here at the WHS in Berlin!

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Olaf Scholz', written in a cursive style.

Olaf Scholz
Chancellor of the
Federal Republic of Germany



A Defining Year for Global Health Action

A new edition of the World Health Summit brings us together this year, after key UN High-level Meetings and deliberations of the G7 and G20 were held over the last few months. I am delighted to be a Patron alongside Chancellor Olaf Scholz and WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus.

As our world is shaken by multiple crises, our work to enhance cooperation, coordination and solidarity at the international level is more important than ever, in order to be better able to face future health threats and emergencies, together. No government or multilateral organization can face such threats alone. Only resilient health systems can help us achieve health sovereignty in all countries, a full-fledged prerequisite for global health security.

If we want to be efficient in tackling health challenges, we have to accelerate our cooperation on other pressing global issues, climate change, conflicts, population growth, and urbanization. This is why I believe strongly in a multi-disciplinary One Health approach, as human, animal and environmental health are fundamentally interconnected. This comprehensive approach is at the core of France's global health strategy for 2023-2027, in line with the European Union's Global Health Strategy.

One area where investments cannot wait: human resources, which are the very backbone of our health systems and a key element of our defense against future pandemics. This is why we have been supporting the WHO Academy in Lyon, to provide on-site and remote training of thousands of healthcare professionals around the world.

Achieving this ambitious agenda requires stepping up investments, in the spirit of the Paris Pact for People and the Planet which emerged in Paris last June when close to 100 countries met and agreed that no country should have to choose between fighting

poverty and fighting for the planet, stressing that each country should be able to follow its own transition path. This implies more public investment, relying in particular on more efficient multilateral development banks, and a better leverage on the private sector.

Our ambition: a world where vulnerable countries are better equipped to face future crises, including pandemics, and where we can guarantee the fundamental right to health for all.

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to be 'Emmanuel Macron'. The signature is stylized and fluid, with a long horizontal stroke at the bottom.

Emmanuel Macron
President of the
Republic of France

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I am honoured to welcome you to the 2023 World Health Summit, alongside fellow patrons Chancellor Olaf Scholz and President Emmanuel Macron.

It was 75 years ago that the World Health Organization was founded, as countries were rebuilding after the collective trauma of World War II. It was during this founding moment that the authors of WHO's constitution affirmed both that health is a human right, and that the health of all people is fundamental to peace and security.

Since that time, the world has seen major improvements in health. Life expectancy globally, for both sexes, has increased from 46 to 73 years, with the biggest gains in the poorest countries. WHO led a successful campaign to eradicate smallpox and is part of a consortium that has driven polio to the brink. Forty-two countries have eliminated malaria, and the HIV and

TB epidemics have been pushed back. In the past 20 years alone, smoking has fallen by a third, maternal mortality has fallen by a third and child mortality has more than halved. In just the past five years, new vaccines for Ebola and malaria have been developed and licensed.

These accomplishments were the collective work of hardworking individuals, organizations, and governments from around the world, and WHO has been a proud partner, supporting countries as they implement policies and programs to drive change towards a healthier world.

Despite these advances, many challenges remain. Noncommunicable diseases now account for 70% of all deaths globally; obesity rates have skyrocketed; antimicrobial resistance threatens to unwind a century of medical progress; and air pollution and climate change are jeopardising the very habitability of the planet on which all life depends.

At the same time, we continue to face vast disparities in access to health services, between and within countries and communities. Since 2000, the number of people

with access to essential services has increased significantly, but the number of people who are impoverished every year by out-of-pocket health spending has almost doubled, to 1.1 billion.

The severe inequities and inequalities in global health were amplified by the three years of the COVID-19 pandemic. On top of the death and suffering it caused, COVID-19 severely disrupted health systems, roiled economies, and caused immense social upheaval, while also exposing and exacerbating political fault lines, within and between nations.

Moving forward, we must learn the lessons not only of these pandemic years, but of the whole 75 years of WHO's existence. In keeping with the areas of focus of this year's World Health Summit, I offer three priorities.

First, the pandemic was a vivid demonstration that an advanced medical care system is not the same thing as a strong public health system. Some countries with the most sophisticated medical care were overwhelmed by COVID-19. By contrast, some lower-income countries with fewer

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resources fared much better, thanks to investments in public health after outbreaks of SARS, MERS, H1N1 and others. They had the muscle memory, and they had the trust of their communities.

Second, the backbone of public health is robust primary health care. That is why WHO calls on all countries, at all income levels, to invest in public health, and especially in primary health care. Such investments will repay themselves many times over by preventing or delaying the need for more costly secondary and tertiary care, as well as working as an early warning system for health emergencies.

At a time when economies are stagnating, debt is rising and budgets are squeezed, governments are under pressure to

tighten the purse strings. But now is exactly the right moment to make strategic investments in health – investments in human capital – that will pay dividends for decades to come in more healthy, productive, secure, equitable and sustainable societies.

Which leads to the third lesson: the importance of cooperation and multi-stakeholder collaborations, such as those fostered at the World Health Summit. The lesson of the pandemic is clear: we can only face shared threats with a shared response, based on a shared commitment to solidarity and equity. That is what the pandemic accord that countries are now negotiating is all about: an agreement between nations to work in cooperation with each other – not in competition – to

prepare for and respond to epidemics and pandemics. The same is true for the Pandemic Fund, which WHO is co-administering with the World Bank.

There is a famous Ethiopian proverb that says when spiderwebs unite, they can tie up a lion. The challenges we face in global health can seem daunting. No single country or agency can address these challenges alone. Let's learn the lesson of the COVID pandemic: when we work together, we can overcome anything.



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