

World Health Summit 2020 Opening Speech by Detlev Ganten

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

Health is the greatest Wealth!

Welcome to the World Health Summit 2020

Seien Sie alle herzlich willkommen

I am Detlev Ganten

Bienvenue à vous tous

bem vindo

Salem Aleikum

Shalom -

also on behalf of the World Health Summits academic backbone, the M8 Alliance, a wonderful network of 30 prestigious international Academic Health Centers and Universities around the world and more than 140 National Academies of Medicine, Engineering and Science!

I welcome you also in the name of my Co-President of the World Health Summit 2020, Charles Ibingira from Kampala, Uganda.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends,

The Covid 19 Pandemic is making it clear to everybody, that solutions can only be found by overcoming personal, institutional, national interests.

More than ever, the name of the game is international cooperation and solidarity.

In complete academic freedom and independence, we from academia invite participants from all over the world, from politics, international institutions, the United Nations family, the World Health Organization, civil society, the private sector - to work together and to seek science-based solutions to the world's most challenging problems.

In these days - the Covid 19 pandemic has to be our priority – the new Corona Virus threatens the health and the life of everybody.

The numbers of infections are increasing, as we speak, at a dangerous speed.

The medical and health systems in many countries are not able to respond adequately.

The world economy is suffering, millions of people lose their jobs, children drop out of schools, violence is rising and social cohesion is at risk.

What is happening?

A tiny little RNA SARS-Corona Virus 2 of the family of other human coronaviruses including SARS and MERS, a Virus 120 nm small, with only 30 thousand nucleotide building blocks in their genes, we have three billion!, contained in the droplets of infected people as they speak, sing or sneeze – this small virus crosses the border of nations and continents and threatens to paralyze the world.

But we have made Progress.
We have a better understanding of the Virus.
We can detect and precisely monitor infection.

Simple hygienic measures like

- Keeping physical Distance
- Washing our Hands
- Wearing a Face Mask
- And of course “Lüften” of the rooms, fresh air will help to curb the spread of Covid 19.

This requires participation, cooperation and solidarity of everybody.

We are also making scientific progress.
About 100 years ago Diphtheria was a deadly disease – killing up to 50 % of the children.
Emil von Behring developed the first anti-serum and vaccination here at the Charité Berlin and in 1901 received the first Nobel Prize for Medicine ever – now diphtheria and many other diseases like Measles, Tetanus, Poliomyelitis and others are eradicated.

Flu, Ebola and HIV/Aids and many other diseases can be controlled, treated and prevented.

The goal is to look at what is known about the new virus, to do research and learn more and to seek for solutions. These may be preliminary as our knowledge is limited. Solutions can only be found by completely open, free, transparent investigation and discussion.

Science is able to find out facts and to provide answers and more precise questions. This is a constant process. Self-criticism and criticism at any time is the basis of this scientific process and of any real advances.

Every result will raise new vistas and necessitate new research but hopefully will also provide the basis for new recommendations and solutions.

There is justified hope for vaccination, treatment and prevention of Covid 19.

Admittedly, this is a complex issue.

The challenge of the future is to cope with this complexity.

Politicians have the difficult task to translate recommendations into actions and eventually into laws.

Medical problems will develop into problems of health, economy, social, political and culture. Politicians have no easy job especially if people and society are scared and insecure and seduced to simplistic fake answers. This is the reason, why information and education is so essential. Educated people will be eager to be informed and try to understand.

Education is the best vaccination – against disease, but also against wrong prophets and false or simplistic information.

We have to look ahead and prepare for the future.

This is not the first pandemic and recommendations for such situations were ready on the desks or in the drawers of people in charge.

We could have been better prepared if they would have been implemented.

Prevention is not so popular because it is not spectacular and costs money.

Now we see – that no prevention is a mistake and much more costly.

We also have to be aware that other factors defined in the 17 UN Sustainable Development Goals like climate change, food and nutrition, political instability, war and conflict, flight and migration, are contributing to health problems.

At the same time, the world's population continues to grow and to age.

We strongly advocate a holistic and science driven approach to solving these global challenges to health.

We need a holistic view on health, which includes our biology, our environment and our lifestyle;

One Health and Planetary Health .

The 17 Sustainable Development Goals SDGs provide such a holistic framework.

“Health in All Policies” implies that policymakers across different fields take into account the health implications of their decisions, seek synergies and avoid harmful health impacts.

We have not reached this point.

Improving global health requires efforts from all of us, it is essential that stakeholders from academia, politics, the private sector and civil society work together and contribute to the common goal.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, dear friends
Let 's look forward.

Due to the worsening situation in the COVID-19 pandemic, this year 2020 the World Health Summit is being held exclusively in digital form. This enables worldwide participation, active involvement and even wider outreach.

I am sure we shall come out of the World Health Summit 2020 with new energy and inspiration to work together to improve health and well being for all – our common noble goal.

The World Health Summit as a leading meeting on global health is more important than ever.

Thank you all for listening.