



Negative COVID-19 Test ©istock

# AN EFFECTIVE INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE BY GERMANY TO COVID-19

## I. GUIDING PRINCIPLES OF AN INTERNATIONAL RESPONSE

Germany is facing major challenges around the world due to the COVID-19 pandemic. It has brought home to us how interconnected and interdependent we are in the globalised world. The pandemic's impact on health and the resulting humanitarian and socio-economic consequences now affect all areas of life.

International cooperation and coordination are the key to an effective global response to COVID-19 as well as to the economic upheaval that is already becoming evident. Germany intends to live up to its international responsibility by adopting a comprehensive and coherent approach.

We have to assume that the number of COVID-19 cases around the world will continue to rise. Alongside the worst affected countries in Europe or the United States, COVID-19 has grave consequences for countries with weak healthcare systems and often weak state structures, a high population density, extreme poverty and citizens with underlying health issues, a lack of access to safe

drinking water as well as hunger and malnutrition. States in conflict regions and people already affected by humanitarian crises, for example internally displaced persons or refugees, are especially vulnerable. Particularly high infection rates and serious consequences for the population and the functioning of the healthcare systems are to be expected in these countries. Even those emerging economies and developing countries hardly affected by the pandemic are likely to experience a crisis due to their dependency on the export of raw materials, remittances from abroad, tourism and their integration in international production and supply chains. We have to be prepared for increased political, economic and social instability which could also have considerable repercussions for Germany and the EU.

Both within the EU and by international comparison, Germany is considered to be one of the countries which, thanks to its good healthcare system, was well-prepared for the pandemic and reacted quickly. The German Government thus believes that it has an obligation to work around the world to strengthen healthcare systems and pandemic resilience.

That is why Germany is active alongside the European Commission and other partners in the multilateral **ACT Platform** (Access to COVID-19 Tools) in particular. In implementation of a G20 pledge, it has set itself the goal of working towards the development and fair distribution across the globe of COVID-19 vaccines as well as drugs and diagnostics for the virus. The Platform is a key instrument for containing the pandemic around the world.

Only if the pandemic is brought under control all over the world and on a durable basis, and if the efforts to overcome its secondary effects are coordinated at multilateral level, can it be defeated for good. Germany intends to play its part in reaching this goal.

## II. FRAMEWORK FOR POLITICAL ACTION – MULTILATERAL, EUROPEAN, BILATERAL

The German Government's international efforts to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic will take place at three coordinated levels:

- **Multilateral:** The German Government will use its membership of the UN Security Council as well as that of other UN organs and the G7/G20 for an approach which places the United Nations and other multilateral organisations, especially the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank, at the centre of the efforts to resolve the current crisis. The German Government intends to continue fully supporting the WHO, which is at the heart of the direct efforts to tackle the pandemic. It is working to greatly strengthen the WHO's structures and its response capabilities – politically, institutionally as well as financially. The German Government will actively help to shape a lessons learned process in international pandemic preparedness.

At the same time, it will place particular importance on prevention. Our goal is to bolster the resilience of states and organisations to future pandemics on a durable basis. We want to highlight the links between global health and global security as well as stability, also in the case of UN peacekeeping measures.

Humanitarian crises will be aggravated by the socio-economic impact of the pandemic. The German Government is therefore engaged both politically and financially in the COVID-19 response coordinated by the UN, including the WHO's Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. It is focusing both on the immediate response to the pandemic and humanitarian assistance as well as on the endeavours to overcome longer-term socio-economic effects. It is working to ensure that aid workers continue to have access and that the supply chains for relief goods are maintained even in the conditions resulting from the pandemic.

- **European:** The COVID-19 pandemic highlights the need for more intensive EU-wide cooperation and a more prominent role



Patients from Italy at the Leipzig/Halle Airport  
©Peter Endig/dpa-Zentralbild/dpa

for the EU in the sphere of global health, enhanced EU coordination as well as stronger EU crisis response capabilities, both internally and externally. This requires enhanced situation assessment and forecasting capabilities. In collaboration with the other current members of the Trio Presidency, the German Government intends to make overcoming the pandemic and kick-starting economic recovery one of the main focuses of Germany's EU Council Presidency. Within this context, one of our aims will be to pursue the Franco-German initiative for an EU health strategy with a view to fostering strategic sovereignty in the healthcare sector. Among other things, we will call for the coordination of European procurement policies for future vaccines and treatments.

In the field of external trade, our main goal will be to support our partners in Africa, in particular vulnerable states in the Middle East, as well as in the Western Balkans and the countries of the Eastern Partnership as they tackle the challenges presented by COVID-19. To this end, the Team Europe approach, i.e. comprehensive and joint efforts on the part of all EU institutions and member states, must be further developed and implemented in a coherent and effective manner.

- **Bilateral:** The German Government is carrying out national programmes which enhance those of the European Union and of the United Nations as well as those of other international organisations. The main focuses of our national programmes are Africa, particularly vulnerable states in the Middle East, the Western Balkans and the countries of the Eastern Partnership.

In the efforts to tackle the pandemic, the German Government is also counting on NATO, which has proved to be a key complementary player in providing support.

### III. THEMATIC CLUSTERS AND INSTRUMENTS

The German Government's international efforts take the form of a networked approach. We will initially focus on the three priority areas which are at the heart of the international response to COVID-19 and make a major contribution towards ending the pandemic and dealing with its consequences:

#### 1. Health, including research, development and innovation

*Support in providing protective equipment, medical supplies, diagnostics, infection control and technical expertise:*

Taking into account German and European needs, the German Government will comply with requests from other states for assistance in the medical sphere, such as for protective clothing, medical equipment, testing or advisory services. In doing so, it will mainly rely on the instruments of the WHO, the EU, the World Bank and the UN.

*Strengthening research, development and production regarding vaccines, drugs and diagnostics; global distribution and health governance:*

Only globally coordinated research efforts and a distribution of vaccines and drugs which is global, fair and based on epidemiological and other relevant criteria can make a significant contribution towards ending the pandemic. In particular, the German Government will support the ACT Platform and the key players WHO, the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovation (CEPI), the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria (GFATM).

*Expanding global health crisis management*

The German Government intends to call for the WHO's leading and coordinating role in the global health architecture to be strengthened both financially and politically: through increased financial autonomy and the development of robust and durable crisis response capabilities.

*Targeted technical cooperation to strengthen healthcare systems:*

Staaten mit besonders schwachen Gesundheits- und Ernährungssystemen wird die Bundesregierung durch bilaterale und multilaterale Instrumente der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit sowie dem G7-Biosicherheitsprogramm unterstützen.

#### 2. Crisis instruments, humanitarian assistance, stabilisation, as well as transitional development assistance

*Humanitarian assistance, transitional development assistance:*

As the second largest donor of humanitarian assistance, the German Government intends to make its contribution towards meeting the additional humanitarian need. In doing so, it will be guided by the UN's COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan

(GHRP). At the same time, it will use transitional development assistance to respond to the broad spectrum of consequences of the pandemic in the crisis regions, particularly in the Middle East and in sub-Saharan Africa. Assistance will be provided for African armed forces in implementing isolation and quarantine measures in conformity with human right standards in the form of advisory services and equipment.

*Stabilisation of states which have been severely affected by COVID-19:*

Within the EU and the UN, the German Government will step up its efforts in the fields of stabilisation and security policy. Above all, the resilience of states in the Sahel of particular relevance to international security should be strengthened.

#### 3. Economy, including multilateral financial aid and debt relief measures; foreign trade and investment promotion and trade policy

*The German Government supports multilateral initiatives at G7 and G20 level as well as those of the World Bank, regional development banks and the IMF.*

*Easing of the financial burden on the poorest states:*

The German Government supports and is participating in the debt moratorium for the poorest states within the G7/G20 framework and in the Paris Club. Germany is advocating that all G20 states take part and that private-sector creditors be included. Furthermore, Germany is contributing to the emergency instruments of the IMF and the World Bank Group.

*Sustainable support for sections of society and economies hit particularly hard by COVID-19*

In an internationally coordinated approach, the German Government will use development cooperation funds to assist sections of society hit particularly hard by COVID-19 and to provide targeted assistance to the private sector, especially in the reform partner countries of German development cooperation. In this, the German Government will be guided by the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

*Foreign trade and investment promotion and trade policy*

The German Government will help German business to continue and set up projects and investments in the countries affected, as well as to take advantage of new opportunities in third markets. In terms of trade policy, it will continue to urge the reform of the World Trade Organisation (WTO). In particular, it will call for initiatives to make it easier for developing countries to integrate into global trade.

As a complement to this, the German Government will work to ensure that the EU further expands its ambitious bilateral trade

agenda. Our goal is to lessen dependency on individual supplier countries through diversification, to maintain (agricultural) supply chains and, at the same time, to foster the integration of partner countries into world trade.

*Support and expansion of strong and resource-friendly agricultural and food industries*

The German Government intends to continue its support measures aimed at enhancing food security in the regions of the world worst hit in order to prevent the pandemic resulting in a hunger and food crisis.



Meeting of the Federal Government's crisis team at the Federal Foreign Office, Berlin, 17.03.2020 ©Thomas Imo/ photothek.net

**IV. REGIONAL FOCUS – AFRICA, WESTERN BALKANS, EASTERN PARTNERSHIP, ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

On epidemiological as well as strategic grounds, support for the countries of the Western Balkans and in the Eastern Partnership will have priority within the EU, especially in the short term.

Africa is one of the regions around the world which are least well-prepared for the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. Due to weak healthcare systems, in many respects vulnerable populations and a lack of social security systems, there is a danger that development and humanitarian crises with consequences for security will result from the health crisis.

Germany intends to pool its resources wherever they will make a significant difference which is also in Germany's interest. This applies to African countries and to especially vulnerable states in the Middle East. Owing to the regional and transregional armed conflicts, fragile peace processes, terrorism and irregular migration, their destabilisation would also have serious consequences for Germany and the EU. Another focus of Germany's support will be the countries of the Compact with Africa and of the African Union, which plays a key role when it comes to crisis prevention and stabilisation.

## I. THEMATIC CLUSTERS AND INSTRUMENTS

### (1) Health, including research, development and innovation

#### *Support in providing protective equipment, diagnostics, infection control and technical expertise:*

Taking into account German and European needs, the German Government will grant bilateral requests for protective equipment. In addition to requests where something concrete is being offered in return, it will give priority to requests for assistance from partners with which Germany has special ties. Alongside our EU partners, these include especially vulnerable states. The sooner the assistance is provided, the greater its value will be in terms of health promotion and foreign policy. The German Government will rely above all on instruments of the WHO, the EU, the United Nations and other multilateral organisations as well as other partners such as the Vaccine Alliance (Gavi) and the Global Fund (GFATM) within the framework of the ACT Accelerator. It will make use of bilateral instruments and programmes such as the Global Health Protection Programme (GHPP) or the German Epidemic Preparedness Team (SEEG). Furthermore, it will advocate that the European Early Warning and Response System (EWRS) for communicable diseases be expanded to include other countries – e.g. those of the Eastern Partnership – and support the secondment of EU experts to partner countries.

#### *Strengthening research, development and production in relation to vaccines, drugs and diagnostics; global distribution and health governance:*

The promotion of the research, development, production and worldwide distribution of vaccines, therapies and diagnostics in connection with COVID-19 are key prerequisites for overcoming the crisis. There are a wide range of national, European and international focuses for research cooperation. In addition to swift development, an adequate level of production as well as fair international access for all states to the products developed must be ensured. The main focus is on the ACT Platform with its key players the WHO, CEPI, Gavi and GFATM. Only globally coordinated research efforts and a distribution of vaccines and drugs which is global, fair and based on epidemiological and other relevant criteria can make a significant contribution towards ending the pandemic. At the same time, research into preventing zoonotic diseases, also to avert further pandemics, must be strengthened (one health approach).

#### *Expansion of global health crisis management:*

The German Government is also calling for the significant strengthening of global health crisis management. It is vital here to strengthen, both financially and politically, the leading and coordinating role of the WHO in the global health architecture, in

particular by ensuring greater financial autonomy, the development of robust and sustainable crisis response capabilities, including a fully financed WHO emergency fund, as well as support for other players such as Gavi, the GFATM, the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) of the United Nations.

#### *Targeted technical cooperation to strengthen healthcare systems:*

Staaten mit besonders schwachen Gesundheits- und Ernährungssystemen werden durch die Bundesregierung wo möglich bei deren Stärkung unterstützt, etwa beim Aufbau von Laborkapazitäten und Krankheitsmeldesystemen oder der Landwirtschaft. Dem dienen bilaterale und multilaterale Instrumente der Entwicklungszusammenarbeit sowie das Biosicherheitsprogramm der G7.

### (2) Crisis instruments, humanitarian assistance, stabilisation, as well as transitional development assistance

#### *Humanitarian assistance, transitional development assistance:*

As the second largest donor of humanitarian assistance and in light of the increasing additional humanitarian need, the German Government intends to work actively to save human lives and to alleviate human suffering. In doing so, it will be guided by the UN's COVID-19 Global Humanitarian Response Plan (GHRP) and support UN organisations and humanitarian NGOs as well as the organisations of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements. It will also strengthen the relevant coordination mechanisms, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UN OCHA), the NATO Euro-Atlantic Disaster Response Coordination Centre (EADRCC) and the EU's Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC).

The German Government will support African armed forces by providing advice on the implementation of government isolation and quarantine measures in conformity with human rights standards, equipment (medical equipment) and training (work in medical laboratories).

#### *Stabilisation of states which have been severely affected by COVID-19:*

In crisis areas such as the Sahel, it can be assumed that the impact of the pandemic will further weaken the remaining minimum level of political stability (in terms of security). The German Government will step up its stabilisation and security engagement, both bilaterally and within the EU and UN. The main goal will be to strengthen the resilience of states of particular importance to international security.

### **(3) Economy, including multilateral financial aid and debt relief measures; foreign trade and investment promotion and trade policy**

The German Government supports multilateral initiatives at G7 and G20 level as well as those of the World Bank, regional development banks and the IMF.

#### *Easing of the financial burden on the poorest states:*

Germany supports and participates in the debt moratorium for the poorest states within the G7/G20 framework and in the Paris Club. In the Paris Club and in the G20, the German Government will advocate that all G20 take part and that private-sector creditors also be included. Furthermore, Germany is already contributing to the IMF Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust (CCRT) and supports the IMF emergency measures and those of the World Bank Group, such as the Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility (PEF). The German Government is also examining whether to contribute once more to the Poverty Reduction Growth Trust (PRGT) managed by the IMF, from which concessional (emergency) loans are financed.

#### *Sustainable support for sections of society and economies hit particularly hard by COVID-19*

The German Government intends to use development cooperation funds in an internationally coordinated approach to help sections of society hit especially hard by COVID-19 and to provide targeted assistance to the private sector, especially in Germany's reform partner countries. Furthermore, in international organisations it is calling for the huge efforts which will be needed to support economies as a result of the pandemic and to foster the recovery of economies and societies to be undertaken in the spirit of the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement.

#### *Foreign trade and investment promotion and trade policy*

Using tried and tested instruments of foreign trade and investment promotion, the German Government will help German business to continue and set up projects and investments in the affected countries, especially those of the Compact with Africa, as well as to take advantage of new opportunities in third markets. Germany will thus help safeguard jobs at home and abroad, foster economic stability in countries hit hardest, as well as boost the global upswing after the crisis.

In terms of trade policy, the COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to strengthen rules-based trade under the auspices of the WTO, particularly to support weaker members of the international community and to enhance (market) transparency. For the alternative would be the "law of the strong". The German Government will continue to urge the reform of the WTO. In particular, it will call for initiatives to make it easier for developing countries to integrate into global trade. In addition, health-related initiatives

can lend fresh momentum to the WTO, such as an open discussion on the expansion of the WTO Pharma-Agreement or on an essential health goods agreement.

As a complement to this, the German Government will work to ensure that the EU further expands its ambitious bilateral trade agenda in order to reduce its dependency on individual supplier countries through diversification, maintain (agricultural) supply chains and, at the same time, foster the integration of partner countries into world trade. A blanket policy on reshoring and relocation would have a negative global impact and would especially harm developing countries at the other end of the supply chain.

#### *Support and expansion of strong and resource-friendly agricultural and food industries*

With regard to the agricultural and food industries, the German Government intends to continue its support measures aimed at enhancing food security in the regions of the world worst affected in order to effectively prevent the pandemic resulting in a hunger and food crisis.

## **II. REGIONAL FOCUS – AFRICA, WESTERN BALKANS, EASTERN PARTNERSHIP, ESPECIALLY VULNERABLE STATES IN THE MIDDLE EAST**

On epidemiological as well as strategic grounds, support for the countries of the Western Balkans and in the Eastern Partnership will have priority within the EU, especially in the short term. For if we want to succeed in the fight against COVID-19 in Europe, then we will also need to help combat the virus in our immediate neighbourhood. It is important that we also support efforts to adapt migration management on the ground to the COVID-19 situation. In the Western Balkans and in the countries of the Eastern Partnership, the political investments of more than a decade are at stake.

Africa is among the regions in the world which are least well prepared to deal with the impact of the COVID-19 crisis. At the same time, it is not possible to assess the situation reliably due to the lack of structures and processes for data transfer. There is a danger that weak healthcare systems, populations which are vulnerable in many respects and a lack of social security systems will turn the health crisis into a development crisis with clearly discernible consequences for security policy and far-reaching effects on poverty and hunger. Here, too, Europe has a special responsibility. Germany will therefore continue to stand by the people of Africa and carry on its close cooperation with African partners at this difficult time, adapting it to the current challenges, for example within the framework of the existing Compact with Africa initiative. Strengthening African healthcare systems, the fight against humanitarian crises, in particular against hunger and dealing with the social and economic consequences of the crisis will lie at the centre of the German Government's engagement.

Germany intends to pool its resources where they can bring about tangible changes which are also in Germany's interest. Firstly, this applies to African countries and to especially vulnerable states in the Middle East. They are particularly reliant on assistance. Furthermore, their destabilisation in terms of regional and transregional armed conflicts, fragile peace processes, terrorism and irregular migration would also have serious consequences for Germany and the EU. This also applies to the countries of the Compact with Africa. Targeted support must also be given to the African Union, which plays a key role on the continent – especially when it comes to crisis prevention and stabilisation.

IMPRINT

**Federal Foreign Office**  
Werderscher Markt 1,  
10117 Berlin

