

# Handelsblatt

## GLOBAL EDITION

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### INTERNATIONAL COOPERATION

## Global Action on Health More Vital than Ever

BY TEDROS ADHANOM

Collective action on health is required to meet the challenges every country and region faces. This is an investment that must be made now – or we will all see enormous costs later, argues Ethiopia's foreign minister and candidate for WHO director general, Tedros Adhanom.

#### WHY IT MATTERS

We face some very different challenges from country to country and region to region, but in this globalized community we are in a unique position that requires us to confront all of them together.

#### FACTS

In order to meet domestic obligations, many countries' contribution to international health efforts is declining.

The WHO prioritizes urgent challenges in developing nations, but

there are also health issues in Europe.

Eastern Europe saw a 57 percent increase in annual HIV infections between 2010 and 2015.

As we saw with the **Ebola outbreak** in West Africa and countless other international health emergencies, the willingness of Europe to stand up and provide for others in times of crisis has continued to

be one of its defining characteristics. And it has saved, and continues to save, innumerable lives around the globe.

Yet, in this era of profound changes - Brexit, heightened security fears, migration crises, climate change, and economic fragility - there is some uncertainty as to where international cooperation is headed. And in order

to meet domestic obligations, contribution to international health efforts is declining.

But neither politics nor economics is a worthy excuse to neglect global health action. This is an investment that must be made now - or we will all see enormous costs later.

Health threats, like terrorism, are cross-border issues and must be fought collectively. This cannot be relegated to an 'every nation for itself' approach. Health is utterly impervious to compartmentalized interventions.

The complexity of pandemics like Zika and Ebola, compounded by our world's increasing interconnectivity and an unprecedented flow of migration, requires a global response with high-level political and diplomatic engagement. If we are going to properly protect the people of the world, national and international authorities must cooperate - every day - to put health at the center of the security, economic and development agendas in order to adapt and plan for the challenges ahead.

Headline-grabbing pandemics are but one example of the need for a collaborative, integrated approach.

For many living across Europe, it may seem as though bodies like the

“Europe need not merely be a benefactor of the global cooperation on health, it ought to be a beneficiary too.”

World Health Organization operate through a one-way relationship - absorbing money, skills and technology, and doling it out to far-off, developing countries. But in its very nature, WHO ought to drive forward health-care in every nation and every demographic, including Europe.

While it is appropriate that a great deal of WHO's global focus is on the urgent challenges in developing nations, we must equally recognize the modern health issues in Europe and support the continent's drive for innovation and resilience.

Developed nations are more technologically advanced, more aware, and better equipped than ever before - and yet health system reform and healthcare financing - both of which are consistently top priorities for governments - struggle year after year to obtain the necessary public funding.

Europe need not merely be a benefactor of the global cooperation on health, it ought to be a beneficiary too.

After all, diseases like measles and rubella - that could and should be eliminated by vaccination - still provoke outbreaks in the region. Europe must remain vigilant, which requires support. Meanwhile, parts of the continent are witnessing an increase in new HIV cases and multidrug resistant tuberculosis. Eastern Europe saw a 57 percent increase in annual HIV infections between 2010 and 2015. The international community must jump in to assist European in-

terventions against these worrying trends, just as it would elsewhere.

If we are to build a lastingly healthier world, we must tackle the problems in both developed and developing nations and not shirk or ignore any of them. We face some very different challenges from country to country and region to region, but in this globalized community we are in a unique position that requires us to confront all of them together. And the notion that some regions don't need international support and cooperation is false.

Drawing on experiences with Ebola, Zika, and other health struggles around the world, nations are learning to become more resilient and more able to prevent problems - acting and reacting differently. As a result, reliance on emergency support will lessen over time. With stronger developing nations, better prepared to fight disease, there will be less of a burden on Europe and the world. There will be more time and resources to dedicate to cross-regional planning and to “quieter” needs that have been overlooked in favor of immediate, large-scale dangers.

Just as every emergency can be a dangerous catalyst, every success can also contribute to greater success for others. We are all intertwined.

So let's not allow ourselves to be convinced that we can avoid looking outward, avoid working with nations across the world. Or that we should build ourselves up - and ourselves

alone. This simply will not work - not for health, anyway. Our fate is collective and so too must be our effort.

To contact the author:  
[gastautor@handelsblatt.com](mailto:gastautor@handelsblatt.com)

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