

“Beyond Ebola: a G7 agenda to help prevent future crises and enhance security in Africa”

In 2014 the unprecedented outbreak of Ebola came as a shock to the world. Neither the countries directly affected nor the international community were prepared to cope with an epidemic of this magnitude and its far-reaching consequences. Our aim remains to get the number of new Ebola cases across the region down to zero as soon as possible. The crisis is testing our ability to live up to the challenges and in particular to find regional and international responses to this crisis and possible future ones. The human suffering of the people of Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea and the whole region is a constant reminder for us to reinforce our efforts to fight the epidemic and its consequences. It has exposed the lasting impact of their history of conflict on the resilience of the countries concerned, and thus the importance of sustainable peace and statebuilding for the prevention of this kind of crisis. We, therefore, welcome the initiative undertaken by Ghana, Norway and Germany in the United Nations to elaborate a comprehensive concept to strengthen national and multilateral systems to prevent and manage future health crises and the high-level panel appointed by UNSG Ban Ki-Moon whose work should promote the development of this concept.

The outbreak has underscored the need to intensify overall cooperation and coordination, in particular at the regional/cross-border level in Africa, in order to prevent the spread of diseases and to effectively counter epidemics and other newly emerging types of crises. Efficient and well-established regional cooperation will contain and mitigate negative consequences of health crises as well as environmental and natural disasters with the potential to become crises of a global dimension. This cooperation will also contribute to enhancing African security structures and capacities in general.

The success of African regional cooperation depends on functioning interaction between regional organisations under the pan-African umbrella of the African Union and African leadership.

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers, have - in close cooperation with the African Union and other African regional organisations (EAC, ECOWAS, IGAD) – developed this agenda to contribute to enhancing security cooperation in Africa, focussing on the prevention of future epidemics and other newly emerging types of crises. By building on established patterns of cooperation within the framework of these organisations, looking at concurring initiatives in different African regions and spreading success stories of individual organisations to other regions, we strive to strengthen capacities and governance within as well as between African regional organisations.

We underline our willingness to closely coordinate our ongoing efforts to enable and enhance African partners, in the G7, EU, United Nations or other formats. Crisis prevention mechanisms and security structures can only work when following a comprehensive and transparent approach that facilitates synergies between all stakeholders and partners.

Preparing for epidemics / new types of crises

Ebola showed that the international community is confronted with new types of crises posing new security challenges. In September 2014, the UN Security Council declared Ebola a threat to international peace and security. The fight against Ebola reveals that in reaction to such crises, a complex, tailored multi-actor response,

including in-depth involvement of experts of different areas – here: of the health and the science and research sector – is required. It underlines the importance of preparing for the prevention and management of new types of crises now by improving regional and international cooperation with regard to prevention, early detection as well as rapid response mechanisms. We therefore welcome the Ebola resolution agreed by the Special Session of the WHO's Executive Board in January which formally initiated the lessons learned process with respect to health crises in the WHO. In New York on 25 September 2014, we, the G7 Foreign Ministers, welcomed the leading role of the United Nations and the World Health Organization and the decision to launch the first UN Mission to tackle a health security challenge, the "United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response". We applauded the international assistance coming from nation states and institutions like the European Union, the African Union, the World Bank, the African Development Bank, as well as NGOs and private companies. We underscored our willingness to provide relief to the countries ravaged by the virus and our intention to enter into a dialogue with the most affected countries, neighbouring states and international partners. Today, we reiterate our commitment by ensuring sustained efforts to fight this disease and its consequences as well as improve preparedness to prevent and fight the spreading of other infectious diseases, in close cooperation with African partners, the United Nations, the World Health Organisation and the international community. We strive to:

- intensify support and capacity building (for national level) with regard to the health sector in close collaboration with the WHO, global health partnerships and health sector donors, while encouraging increased national sustainable investment in the health sector to develop and improve the national capacities required by the WHO's International Health Regulations, including laboratories and surveillance and tracing systems
- enhance regional epidemic preparedness
 - by promoting cross-border institutional cooperation/information sharing,
 - by strengthening regional authorities, e.g. the West African Health Organisation (WAHO) and the IGAD Health Program, for preventing and fighting diseases, including neglected tropical diseases,
 - by supporting the development of regional mechanisms for sharing disease surveillance information and analysis, taking into account the reflections within ECOWAS and IGAD to establish a regional Center for Disease Control and the newly proposed AU Center for Disease Control,
 - by promoting, based on the experience of ASEOWA, the setting up of regional pools of rapidly deployable experts for responding to potentially emerging new health security crises early, in this respect it welcomes the EU's willingness to explore the establishment of a reserve pool of health experts on a voluntary basis for rapid and targeted deployment,
 - by facilitating exchange on best practice in combating the current Ebola outbreak,
 - by taking into account that the involvement and active participation of local communities in the fight against the epidemic is crucial;
- assure best possible support for international health-care workers in the field including medical evacuation where appropriate, in the event they contract the virus;

- promote, based on a comprehensive lessons-learned process regarding the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and drawing from the relevant WHO resolution¹, the development of a coordinated international and regional preparation for health security crises and to develop and refine measures to this end, including research and development on treatments, vaccines and diagnostics;

Beyond Ebola and the prevention of future epidemics, we regard as one crucial lesson from Ebola the need to improve the cooperation and the capacities to respond to new types of crises, the need to ensure local communities are robustly engaged from the outset in combating them, and the need for sustainable peace and statebuilding to strengthen resilience to such types of crises. This requires a better set-up of crisis reaction management that binds together early warning mechanisms, organisational and logistic capacities, expert resources and coordination procedures. In this respect, we aim to:

- support capacity building with governments, regional bodies, civil societies and the private sector on crisis management and crisis communication as well as awareness-raising;
- envisage a dialogue with African partners on the results of exchanges among the G7 on necessary and/or existing assets for the response to new types of crises. This should include the work on identifying fields of excellence, i. a. in the science and research sector, among the G7 to prepare for future crises;

The international conference on Ebola organized in Brussels on 3rd March stressed the need to sustain the international mobilization until there are zero new cases of Ebola in the affected region, to ensure that funding for this critical activity is secured and to plan the next steps in the fight against the virus as well as to help the affected countries to recover. Several international meetings are already planned such as the spring meeting of the IMF and World Bank, a conference of the UN General Secretary in New York, an African Union conference in Malabo in July, and a new European conference during the second semester of 2015.

Promoting biological security

Biological risks, whether they are naturally occurring, deliberate or accidental, do not respect borders. They affect the International Community and may arise anywhere in the world, posing potential challenges similar to those of the Ebola crisis. They require efficient cross-border and multisectoral collaboration and well-established channels of communication. Prevention, detection, preparedness, response and biosecurity measures benefit all countries.

In order to minimise biological risks in partner countries as foreseen by the G7 Global Partnership and pursuing synergies with existing international activities including through the WHO and initiatives, e.g. the Global Health Security Agenda and the implementation of International Health Regulations and similar health-security commitments, we strive to:

¹ Resolution EBSS3.R1 - Ebola: ending the current outbreak, strengthening global preparedness and ensuring WHO's capacity to prepare for and respond to future large-scale outbreaks and emergencies with health consequences

- support capacity development and training to augment prevention, detection, preparedness and response in case of outbreaks of highly infectious diseases and other events relating to biological security;
- improve surveillance, detection, diagnostics capabilities (including specialised laboratories), and multi-sectoral workforce skills needed to prevent, detect, instantly share information and rapidly respond to outbreaks of highly infectious diseases;
- achieve sustainability including through focussing on issues such as equipment maintenance, enhancing and maintaining facilities, and human resources management, including relevant training (e.g. “train the trainer” activities);
- strengthen human and veterinary public health systems, including through providing training, and assisting with skill development;
- improve the management and, where possible, consolidation and reduction of holdings of potentially dangerous biological material and samples, and support the establishment and strengthening of biosecurity and biosafety systems within the country;
- work towards common targets for measuring assistance to accelerate health security implementation;
- enhance the work of national and regional biological safety associations;
- strengthen interregional and international cooperation, including through making best use of international fora, such as the African Union, WHO, the FAO, the OIE, the United Nations Security Council Committee pursuant to resolution 1540 (2004) and the Biological and Toxins Weapons Convention.

Improving border management / cross border collaboration:

Ebola illustrated the challenges of providing effective governance and the delivery of services in border areas. These are commonly areas of low state presence and open cross border flows. It underlined the importance of Integrated Border Management (IBM). IBM keeps areas both open and secure. It fosters regional cooperation in general which enables regional players to address transnational challenges more easily. The aim is to make borders safe yet open for legitimate transport of services, goods, and people while securing against negative aspects. In Africa, main security issues for border management are organized crime, terrorism, illegal trafficking of people, arms, narcotics and dangerous goods, migration, and local cross border conflicts. AU and African regional organisations as well as EU and UN, have already developed numerous border management regimes designed to enable free movement and greater levels of intra-regional trade combined with adequate security. These merit further enhancement for improving social and basic livelihood services, as well as promoting economic growth in border areas.

In light of this, we commit to:

- intensify and extend cross-border cooperation in general in the framework of regional integration mechanisms;
- help to enhance capacities in the field of border control, border management and cross-border cooperation in line with international health regulations and ongoing regional efforts in support of the African Peace and Security Architecture. Support existing regional regimes and international initiatives in the field of border areas

management, such as in the AU Border Program by building on synergies, where possible;²

- help develop regulations and capacities for cross-border cooperation in areas such as health, water or land-related issues, conflict management and management of cross-border traffic (building on the AU Convention on Cross-Border Cooperation);
- strengthen cooperation between existing border protection activities of the United Nations, non-governmental organisations and relevant government agencies to ensure assistance to individuals in need of protection, including refugees, internally displaced populations, returnees, hard to reach pastoralist and cross border mobile populations. Particularly vulnerable groups are refugees, who are at risk of being abducted or subjected to violence (sexual or gender based or other) or exploitation. In response to local needs and requirements, special attention will be given to aspects of good governance, human rights and a “people-to-people approach” which were also highlighted in the frameworks and programmes of the Rabat Process and Khartoum Process³;
- intensify regional cooperation, with a focus on the rule of law, the fight against trafficking in persons and narcotics, terrorism and against the spread of small arms and light weapons (SALW) as well as the promotion of legal cross-border transit, bearing in mind the overall link between security and development. Particular efforts will be aimed at the intensification of the Sahel-Maghreb cooperation, in accordance with UN and EU Sahel strategies and with the G5 Sahel action plan, and SALW control in the Greater Sahel region by coordinating joint activities between donors, regional organisations including the AU and ECOWAS and countries in the region.

We, the G7 Foreign Ministers, will remain seized on this agenda. We have tasked our G7 Africa Directors to follow-up on the matter, in close contact with our African partners and within the regional and organisational frameworks mentioned in this document and in other appropriate fora. We will review progress at our next meeting.

² The AU Border Program focuses on border demarcation and cross border cooperation in resource management, local cross border traffic and local cross border cooperation with several African States under the leadership of the African Union.

³ The Rabat Process and the Khartoum Process are policy- and dialogue initiatives between the EU and West African and East African countries dealing with migration flows, root causes of migration, combatting human trafficking and border control cooperation.