

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

CRISIS MANAGEMENT EXERCISE FOR G20 HEALTH MINISTERS

The G20 Health Ministers will meet in Berlin on 19 and 20 May 2017 at the invitation of Germany's Federal Minister of Health, Hermann Gröhe. One important item on the agenda is a health crisis management exercise. To ensure that we are equipped to deal more effectively with potential health emergencies, the ministers will test their responses to an epidemic scenario together with representatives from international institutions such as the World Health Organization and the World Bank.

The exercise will focus on multilateral coordination, WHO's crisis response mechanisms and the International Health Regulations (IHR). The lessons learned from the Ebola outbreak will play a key role in the exercise. Another goal is to strengthen the ongoing efforts of the G20 states to make continuous improvements in their ability to respond to health emergencies and ultimately to prevent epidemics.

EXERCISE SCENARIO

In 'Anycountry', a fictitious low-income country, an unknown virus is causing a severe respiratory disease. Due to the pathogen's characteristics and the weakness of the local health system, the virus spreads rapidly. What began as a local outbreak develops into an epidemic that quickly spreads into neighbouring countries across the region. There is a risk of a global health emergency.

The participants will deal with questions such as: What are the challenges we face in reporting outbreaks at an early stage? What is the best way we can help Anycountry to deal with the outbreak? Which members of the G20 can provide which resources? How can assistance be coordinated as effectively as possible? In this context, how can we support the World Health Organization? Are travel and trade restrictions likely to be effective or counterproductive, and how can we avoid unjustified restrictions? How can the G20 states help to provide appropriate funding for the emergency response measures? What can we do as the G20 to prevent future epidemics?

FORMAT AND STRUCTURE OF THE EXERCISE

The simulation will take the form of a tabletop exercise. Based on the defined scenario, the participants will discuss the measures required to deal with the emergency and identify solutions. Fictitious news reports and social media communications will be used to make the crisis situation appear more realistic.

The exercise will be held in a separate room at the AXICA convention and conference centre next to the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin. Only the ministers and representatives of the international organisations, each with a single advisor, will have access to the room. This is intended to create the atmosphere of a real crisis management centre.

The exercise was designed by the German Federal Ministry of Health with support from the Robert Koch Institute, the Deutsche Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit (GIZ) GmbH, the World Health Organization and the World Bank. As part of the preparations for the event, a G20 expert conference involving civil society groups and academia was held in Berlin in December 2016 on the subject of global health crisis management.