

Speech by the Chair of the GIZ Management Board, Tanja Gönner, at the 2020 annual press conference

Reliable and forward-looking: GIZ provides effective support in the Corona crisis

Good morning State Secretary Martin Jäger,
good morning ladies and gentlemen,

Welcome to those of you here in the room, and, of course, to those who are joining us this year virtually for the first time.

The world is firmly in the grip of the coronavirus pandemic. It is defining our day-to-day lives, bringing about massive changes for economies and societies around the world and is clearly demonstrating that we are intrinsically linked at a global level. One thing is therefore clear: managing the coronavirus pandemic successfully will only be possible if we work together closely worldwide. International cooperation is pivotal.

While the situation in Europe is easing slightly at present as regards the number of new infections, in the global South the virus is on the rise. In Africa, infection rates are increasing, most notably in South Africa and Egypt. In Latin America, the number of infections is growing exponentially. GIZ is working in six of the ten countries that are on the list of the ten countries worldwide with the highest infection rates.

The crisis is hitting developing countries the hardest. The pandemic is impacting all areas of life: health, the economy, food and drinking water supplies, political participation and the sustainable use of resources. As a result, it is having a destabilising effect in countries which, even under normal circumstances, struggle to provide their populations with basic necessities. Development cooperation is therefore becoming more and more important amid the pandemic, and this will continue once it is over. The aim is to stabilise these countries and make them more resilient to future crises. This involves not only supporting health systems, but also, in and above all, providing long-term effective, structural support to the economic and social systems in our partner countries. This is an issue that is particularly important to me, and I will return to it shortly.

First, I would like us to look at the work we are currently doing to manage the coronavirus crisis. We are operating in around 120 countries worldwide. Our national staff, and the majority (two thirds) of German and international staff, have been and still are on the ground.

In other words: we are working right where we are needed. We have decades of experience of working in crisis situations and have extensive country networks in place. As a result, during the acute phase of measures aimed at containing the pandemic, we were therefore able to provide direct and targeted support.

In consultation with our commissioning parties and partners on the ground, we have so far earmarked total funding of EUR 110 million from the regular portfolio for emergency COVID-19 support measures, some of which we have already redirected. There is also potential to allocate a further sum of around EUR 130 million this year. This means that we can make an important contribution to the Emergency COVID-19 Support Programme drawn up by the German Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development (BMZ).

A priority area of our work is sub-Saharan Africa where, as part of its response to coronavirus, GIZ has currently made funds of around EUR 23 million available for the health sector and for fighting the pandemic.

A key component of our response is the German Epidemic Preparedness Team (SEEG). This was set up by the German Development Minister Gerd Müller in 2015 following the devastating Ebola outbreak in West Africa. To give you a brief insight into its work at present, we have brought along a short film which we would like to show you now.

Film clip (1.30-2.00 minutes)

As was outlined in the film, digital solutions play an important role for GIZ, too, especially at the present time. This is partly because international travel restrictions, the lockdown and social distancing in many countries in which we work leave us with no alternative. On the other hand, however, the opportunities that digitalisation offers in terms of the direct management of the pandemic are excellent. Let me give you an example:

On behalf of BMZ, we have been supporting five innovation centres in Iraq since 2018. Equipped with cutting-edge technology such as 3D printers and laser cutters, young people at the centres in Mosul and Basra are developing digital prototypes for face shields for medical personnel and are manufacturing the shields themselves using 3D printers. So far, more than 10,000 shields have been produced. Local small businesses are to take over production in the future.

Our emergency support measures also include providing assistance to refugees and migrants. In Niger, for example, we have been working on behalf of BMZ and with

cofinancing from the European Union (EU) to organise masks, protective gloves, soap, thermometers and protective goggles for more than 25 hospitals and health centres along the migration routes. To raise awareness of coronavirus, we are also supporting campaigns that are reaching up to 900,000 people in Niger.

Thanks to measures such as these, we have been able to provide swift support within a short space of time. But the primary objective of our work is ensuring that states and societies are stable and can work effectively in the long term. After all, this is the best way of dealing with crises in a more resilient manner. And this brings me back to the point I made earlier.

We are seeing that countries that have previously strengthened the structure of their health systems have also fared better in the coronavirus crisis so far. Through its work with GIZ, Liberia, for instance, was able to strengthen its health system significantly in the area of pandemic preparedness following the Ebola epidemic between 2013 and 2015. Today, the country has epidemic prevention plans, laboratory diagnostics and other systems in place to notify the population swiftly about the course of a disease and preventive measures, etc. These are important steps that the government can build upon in the current crisis, together with our support.

In Nigeria and Ghana, SORMAS (Surveillance, Outbreak Response Management and Analysis System), a digital disease monitoring system, has also been tracking the disease since early February. Health care personnel can use the system to pass on information about infected people and contacts to health authorities in real time. The system makes it easier to slow the spread of COVID-19, especially in regions with weak infrastructures. On behalf of BMZ, we are providing support to scale up the system in Ghana and Nigeria, and will do so in East Africa in future, too.

These examples show that development cooperation creates lasting structures and lays the foundations that will enable us to deal with the next crisis better. And even if the coronavirus continues to challenge us with regard to acute crisis management, we need to think about tomorrow today. This is why it is so important for us as an implementing organisation to work on structures – and this will continue to play a key role. Our core task is to stabilise in the medium and long-term countries that have already been severely impacted economically by the pandemic. This includes food and nutrition security, health, promotion of the economy and employment and climate change mitigation – this all influences how well equipped

people are to deal with a crisis such as this one. We have decades of experience in this area and can bring about change.

In sub-Saharan Africa, for example, we are working on behalf of BMZ in a project in seven countries to create employment prospects for people over the long term. The private sector has been brought on board, too, with more than 70 international companies and local enterprises involved. So far, more than 25,000 people in total have found employment, of whom a third are women and almost half are young people. More than 70,000 people have increased their income by at least ten per cent.

In 2019, we worked with our commissioning parties and partners to support 109,000 people in sub-Saharan Africa in finding employment; we contributed to alleviating hunger and malnutrition for 4.8 million people; and around 50 million people benefited from improved health and medical services.

The fact that the coronavirus pandemic is putting this and other development progress to the test makes it all the more important for us to act quickly, cautiously and sustainably in response. As is already set out in the 2030 Agenda, governments, businesses, the scientific and academic communities, and civil society all need to work together and share responsibility. Only by joining forces will we be able to overcome these as well as other global challenges. One of the main global challenges we face, the effects of which may be far more devastating for many people than the current pandemic, is climate change.

One thing I would like to emphasise is that we can emerge from the coronavirus crisis stronger – if we rebuild in a way that protects the climate and conserves natural resources. We should not focus on one crisis to the detriment of another. In times like these, the need for international cooperation is greater than ever: not only to manage the pandemic and its consequences but also to continue to seek answers to the major issues of sustainability – from an environmental, economic and social perspective.

Managing the crisis and fighting its long-term consequences, climate change and the 2030 Agenda will also feature prominently in Germany's Presidency of the EU Council, which began just yesterday.

Finally, let me turn to our business figures. Between 2015 and 2019, our business volume grew by 43 per cent, with EUR 3.1 billion recorded last year, which is an increase of two per

cent on 2018. Our work in 2019 focused on three key topics: climate and energy, displacement and migration, and security and stabilisation.

The Federal Ministry for Economic Cooperation and Development continued to be our main commissioning party. At around EUR 2.6 billion, income generated from business with BMZ last year remained consistently high. A significant share of this income can be attributed to cofinancing, the additional funding provided by third parties to scale up existing projects. In business with BMZ alone, this was around EUR 384 million last year.

In the past five years, we significantly increased cofinancing from third parties such as the European Union, foreign governments and foundations in the entire public-benefit business area. This grew from EUR 246 million in 2015 to EUR 436 million last year, an increase of 77 per cent.

In 2019, our second largest commissioning party remained the European Union. Funding from the EU alone totalled around EUR 375 million, with cofinancing contributions and direct commissions taken together.

As a federal enterprise, we are also a service provider for the entire German Government, most notably the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation and Nuclear Safety (EUR 154 million), the Federal Foreign Office (EUR 98 million) and the Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs and Energy (EUR 31 million). We are acquiring funding through ideas competitions more and more. Since 2014, the share of income generated in this way has increased by 15 percentage points, and totalled EUR 1,377 billion in 2019 (2014: EUR 601 million). We are delighted to have generated almost half of our income from competitive tenders and achieved success with the services we provide.

As mentioned, it is not possible to overcome the global challenges facing us alone. We, too, will therefore focus more on cooperation with third parties such as non-governmental organisations (NGOs), multilateral organisations and scientific institutions. Over the past year, we have granted EUR 1.48 billion to third parties, an increase of ten per cent on 2018. The growing demand for GIZ's services is also reflected in our workforce figures. At the end of 2019, GIZ had a total workforce of around 22,000 (31 December 2019: 22,199), seven per cent more than the previous year. Most of the workforce – over 80 per cent – work abroad. Around 70 per cent of our staff are national staff in the countries of assignment. Furthermore,

more and more national staff are working in expert and management roles; in 2019, this figure was around 8,000.

We are also very pleased about the increasing internationalisation of our staff. All in all, GIZ employs people from 153 nations. This variety benefits and enriches our work. It also demonstrates the success of the integration efforts made by our company.

And as GIZ's company report this year illustrates, our staff, with their reliability and curiosity, strive every day to bring us closer to achieving our vision of a future worth living for all – including, and, in these times.

Thank you for your attention!