SHARED RESPONSIBILITY, GLOBAL SOLIDARITY:

Responding to the socio-economic impacts of COVID-19

March 2020

United Nations

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I. INTRODUCTION

We are facing a global health crisis unlike any in the 75-year history of the United Nations — one that is killing people, spreading human suffering, and upending people's lives. But this is much more than a health crisis. It is a human crisis. The coronavirus disease (COVID-19) is attacking societies at their core. The IMF has just reassessed the prospect for growth for 2020 and 2021, declaring that we have entered a recession – as bad as or worse than in 2009. The IMF projects recovery in 2021 only if the world succeeds in containing the virus and take the necessary economic measures.[1]

In the face of such an unprecedented situation in recent history, the creativity of the response must match the unique nature of the crisis – and the magnitude of the response must match its scale. No country will be able to exit this crisis alone.

This report is a call to action, for the immediate health response required to suppress transmission of the virus to end the pandemic; and to tackle the many social and economic dimensions of this crisis. It is, above all, a call to focus on people – women, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and on vulnerable groups who are already at risk.

Whole societies must come together. Every country must step up with public, private and civic sectors collaborating from the outset. But on their own, national-level actions will not match the global scale and complexity of the crisis. This moment demands coordinated, decisive, and innovative policy action from the world's leading economies, and maximum financial and technical support for the poorest and most vulnerable people and countries, who will be the hardest hit. Given the world's extensive economic and social interrelationships and trade— we are only as strong as the weakest health system.

The first step is to mount the most robust and cooperative health response the world has ever seen. Health system spending must be scaled up right away to meet urgent needs and the surge in demand for tests, expanded treatment facilities, adequate medical supplies and more health care workers; and for health system preparedness and response in countries where the virus has not yet manifested or where there is no community transmission to date.

The strongest support must be provided to the multilateral effort to suppress transmission and stop the pandemic, led by the World Health Organization (WHO), whose appeals must be fully met. Scientific collaboration in the search for a vaccine and effective therapeutics must be promoted through initiatives such as the WHO-sponsored solidarity trials. Universal access to vaccines and treatment must be assured, with full respect for human rights, gender equality and without stigma.

The second step is to do everything possible to cushion the knock-on effects on millions of people's lives, their livelihoods and the real economy. That means the direct provision of resources to support workers and households, provision of health and unemployment insurance, scale-up of social protection, and support to businesses to prevent bankruptcies and massive job losses. That also means designing fiscal and monetary responses to ensure that the burden does not fall on those countries who can least bear it.

A large-scale, coordinated and comprehensive multilateral response amounting to at least 10 per cent of global GDP is needed now more than ever. This crisis is truly global. It is in everyone's interest to ensure that developing countries have the best chance of managing this crisis, or COVID-19 will

[1] https://www.imf.org/en/News/Articles/2020/03/27/sp032720-opening-remarks-at-press-briefing-following-imfc-conference-call

risk becoming a long-lasting brake on economic recovery.

The third step is to learn from this crisis and build back better. Had we been further advanced in meeting the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, we could better face this challenge - with stronger health systems, fewer people living in extreme poverty, less gender inequality, a healthier natural environment, and more resilient societies. We must seize the opportunity of this crisis to strengthen our commitment to implement the 2030 Agenda and the 17 Sustainable Development Goals. By making progress on our global roadmap for a more inclusive and sustainable future, we can better respond to future crises.

The recommendations in this report are geared to empower governments and propel partners to act urgently.

The United Nations family – and our global network of regional, sub-regional and country offices working for peace, human rights, sustainable development and humanitarian action, will support all governments, working with our partners, to ensure first and foremost that lives are saved, livelihoods are restored, and that the global economy and the people we serve emerge stronger from this crisis. That is the logic of the Decade of Action to deliver the SDGs. More than ever before, we need solidarity, hope and the political will and cooperation to see this crisis through together.

II. SUPPRESS TRANSMISSION TO STOP THE PANDEMIC AND SAVE LIVES

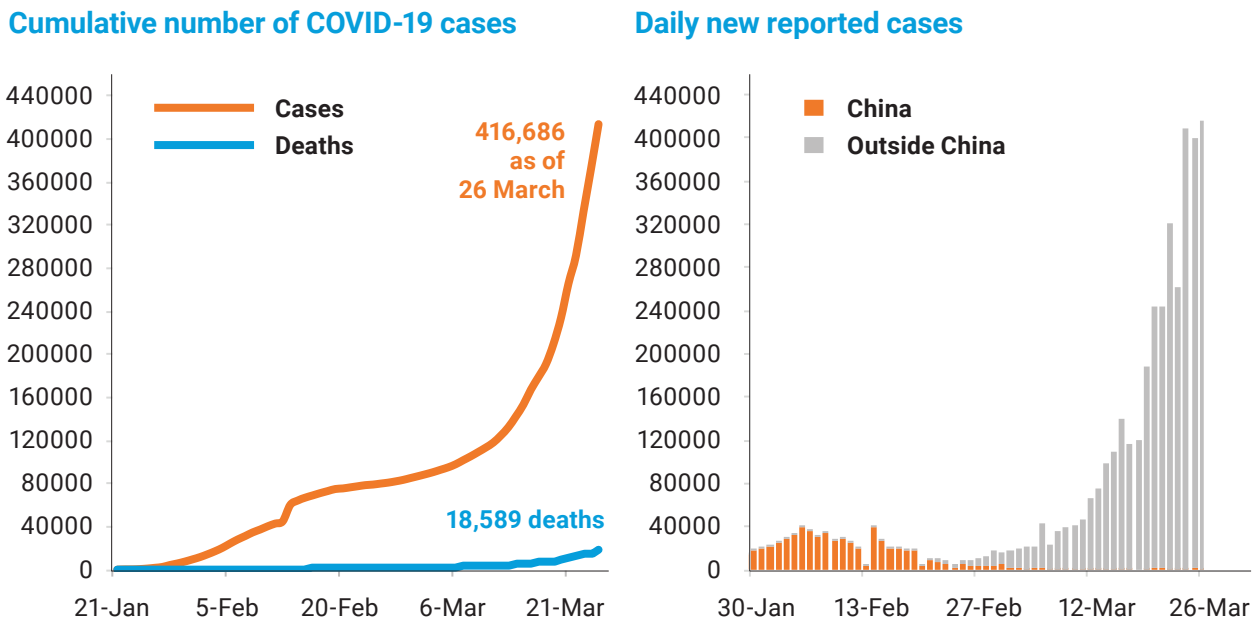
In just 12 weeks, the outbreak of a novel coronavirus disease (COVID-19) has gone from an initially discrete outbreak to a raging pandemic. The COVID-19 outbreak has now affected over 199 countries and territories. As of 26 March, 416,686 confirmed COVID-19 cases have been reported to WHO, and 18,589 deaths, and this is just the tip of the iceberg.

The disease causes respiratory infections of varying severity and is easily transmitted. Once an outbreak has entered the community transmission phase, it can double in scale every 3 to 5 days. Hospitalisation needs grow in leaps and bounds – so fast that it can overwhelm a nation's healthcare system. On average, 20 per cent of those infected develop severe or critical symptoms with case fatality rates well over 1 per cent, and much higher with older age and for persons with underlying conditions.

The speed and scale of the spread, the severity of cases, and the societal and economic disruption has already been dramatic and could be more so as it takes hold in poorer nations. While there has been impressive progress with vaccine development for COVID-19, with first trials initiated just 60 days after the genetic sequence of the virus was shared by China, a broadly available vaccine is not expected for the next 12 to 18 months.

Countries face different scenarios, requiring a tailored response depending on whether countries have no cases; sporadic cases; clusters; or community transmission. Many countries can still act decisively through effective physical distancing, including

FIGURE 1: A FAST SPREADING GLOBAL PANDEMIC



Source: WHO

quarantines, isolation and even lockdowns, testing and contact tracing to limit the further spread, and quickly suppress the transmission of COVID-19. This must be the highest priority for all countries. It is the most effective way to save lives and protect the global economy. However, many countries do not have the resources to prepare themselves for the crisis.

Decisive, urgent and coordinated action by all leaders of nations, businesses, finance, science and communities is needed to suppress transmission of the virus as quickly as possible and stop the pandemic.

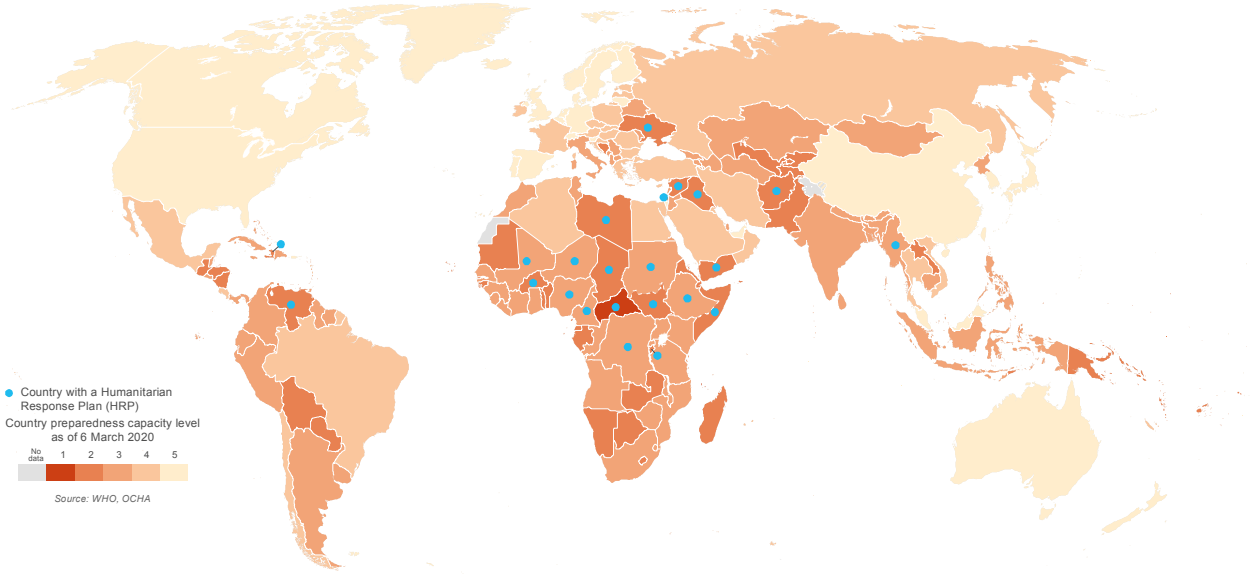
THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITS TO WORKING IN ALL COUNTRIES AROUND THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. Act decisively and early to prevent the further spread or quickly suppress the transmission of COVID-19 and save lives

All countries must immediately scale-up the necessary actions to prevent, suppress and break the transmission, including to:

- Prepare and be ready, especially for those countries who have no or sporadic cases.
- Test and detect all suspected cases as rapidly as possible. This is vital to ensure the possibility of suppressing transmission and to optimize life-saving actions.
- Introduce measures such as quarantine, strictly restricting the movement of people, reducing person-to-person contact overall via work and school closures and physical distancing and educating communities about reducing spread through hand washing.
- Provide safe and effective clinical care to effectively isolate all COVID-19 cases, protect Health Care Workers (HCWS) and maintain essential medical supplies through effective supply chain management.
- Share knowledge and develop and distribute new diagnostics, drugs and vaccines. It is crucial to learn from other countries, constantly assess and regularly update national strategies and guidelines to new knowledge.

FIGURE 2: COUNTRY PREPAREDNESS CAPACITY FOR COVID-19



Source: WHO, OCHA

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

- Take into full account the differentiated impacts on segments of the population, incorporate disadvantaged groups across all societies and adhere to the highest human rights standards.
- Sustain the gains of the health systems, including the eradication of polio and the high immunization rates to prevent measles, polio and cholera.

There is a need to shore up the movement of response-critical personnel and goods. New restrictions on national and international movement for response-critical people and goods are a unacceptable. Manufacturing and distribution of essential medical equipment such as disinfectants and sanitization products, masks, and ventilators needs to be coordinated and promoted internationally, beyond cooperation on vaccines and therapeutics.

2. Urgently strengthen the resilience of health systems.

All countries should implement with the greatest urgency comprehensive health strategies aimed at suppressing transmissions and prevent them from spreading like wildfire.

3. Provide urgent support to developing countries with weaker health systems:

The most vulnerable in the face of this crisis are those who are already at risk: those caught up in or fleeing war and persecution, those already living in highly concentrated and under-served areas, those whose lives have already been upended for other reasons and who lack access to basic social and political protections or to any support systems. Countries with large populations and significant informal sectors are especially vulnerable. The risk for the disease to take a deep foothold in fragile contexts and in poor and densely populated urban areas and slums, unable to self-isolate, would leave us all at risk as the virus continues to spread across the globe.

In addition, more than 50 per cent of the world's rural population and more than 20 per cent of the urban population lack legal health care coverage,[2] while 2.2 billion lack access to water and 4.2 billion to basic sanitation, depriving people of the most basic and effective prevention measure against the virus: frequent handwashing. Here again, the poorest and more vulnerable are at a disadvantage. On average, developing countries spend only about 2 per cent of GDP on health, compared to the global average of 4.7 per cent. Without global solidarity

There needs to be immediate scaled-up development, availability, production and distribution of:

- ✔ **Laboratory testing kits, reagents and supporting materials** and infrastructure to ensure all who need testing get it to drive down transmission and enable a tailored national response.
- ✔ **Essential medical supplies** and ensure **that supply chains** are protected, prioritized and continue to function efficiently and that that these products are distributed on the basis of need.
- ✔ **New diagnostics, drugs and vaccines** to all in need and ensure equitable access.
- ✔ Generate and share **global data, situation assessment, information, knowledge and lessons** learned.

[2] ILO World Social Report 2017-2019, available at https://www.ilo.org/wcmsp5/groups/public/---dgreports/---dcomm/---publ/documents/publication/wcms_604882.pdf

and support, many people remain beyond the reach of global efforts to contain the virus.

It is therefore vital to:

- Sustain humanitarian financing to ensure humanitarian assistance continues to reach the 100 million people most in need.
- Swiftly and decisively support the COVID-19 response launched by WHO with humanitarian agencies, which will assist 51 or more of the most vulnerable and conflict-affected countries in the Middle East, Asia, Africa and Latin America where the impact on people will be particularly severe in the absence of assistance, and where health systems will be most unable to cope.
- Implement the Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. Warring parties across the world must lay down their weapons in support of the bigger battle against COVID-19, the common enemy that is now threatening all of humankind.
- In non-humanitarian settings, achieve efficient coordination of the funding ecosystem for a better impact in the field.

4. Remove obstacles and allow free and immediate access to research results and ensure that vaccines and medicines are accessible to all.

The world is in urgent need of a common vision and plan of action for leveraging the latest advances in scientific research, emerging technologies and new data sources in the fight against COVID-19. The leadership of our science and technology sector is essential to defeating this pandemic and mitigating its potential impacts on achievement of the SDGs. New normative frameworks for open science are needed, and regulatory agencies should work together to remove hurdles for vaccines development and clinical trials treatments.

Countries need to work together to develop a science-based, cooperative approach to allocating scarcer resources on the basis of a truly collective public health needs assessment. Otherwise, key resources will languish unused where they are not needed, and not be available at critical moments where and when they are. This puts us all at risk. The UN is ready to convene and support all efforts.

5. Businesses and Corporations: Step up to the challenge

Many corporations have been helping to shore up the health system response. Pharmaceutical companies are working with governments to increase testing capability, while manufacturers are offering to shift or add new production lines to manufacture masks and ventilators. Tech companies are providing crucial digital tools to overcome social isolation, promote social cohesion and raise awareness on health and safety guidelines to address the pandemic.

Private sector innovation can contribute significantly to the immediate and short-term pandemic response and to long-term resilience. In particular, big data and artificial intelligence must be harnessed to create digital public goods in the form of actionable real-time and predictive insights. This could identify new outbreaks, determine where healthcare and other public services are overloaded, track and counter the spread of xenophobia and disinformation, measure cross-sectoral impacts of the crisis on vulnerable populations in addition to targeting risk communications, financial assistance, and policy interventions. Cross-industry private sector partnerships will be needed to close these information gaps, and many countries will need investment and technical support in analytics capacity.

Ethics and privacy must be considered, and data governance frameworks will be needed to support rapid innovation, ensure transparency about what data is being shared and how it is being used for the public good, and prevent any actor from taking advantage of the crisis to violate human rights or implement systems for mass surveillance.

These efforts need to be scaled across all sectors and in all countries as corporations can provide their supply chains, warehouses, resources and people power to answer to the crisis.

The United Nations calls on all businesses and corporations to take three primary actions:

a. **Adhere to health, safety guidelines and provide economic cushions to workers,** including through ensuring worker safety and social distancing and secure wages for those working from home.

b. **Provide financial and technical support to governments by contributing to the COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund.**

c. **Repurpose their facilities and business plans** to focus on meeting the needs of this crisis. Some have begun to do so; we need many more to follow in suit.

6. Philanthropies: Join this fight

Philanthropies around the world have a unique capacity to place resources and research capabilities rapidly behind the most challenging aspects of this crisis. Now is the time for more of the world's philanthropic organizations to join the 225 funders who have donated an estimated USD 1.9 billion thus far to fight the outbreak[3].

On 13 March, WHO together with the United Nations Foundation and the Swiss Philanthropy Foundation launched the first-of-its-kind COVID-19 Solidarity Response Fund, which enables private individuals, corporations and institutions anywhere in the world to come together to directly contribute to global response efforts. Funds raised will help health workers on the front lines to do their life-saving work, treat patients and advance research for treatments and vaccines. To date, more than 200,000 individuals and organizations have already contributed to this Fund, raising more than USD95 million.

[3] Nonprofit Candid has been compiling philanthropy's response to COVID-19 and estimates that 225 funders have given out 1.9 billion USD to fight the outbreak to 63 recipients.

III. SOCIAL, ECONOMIC AND MULTIDIMENSIONAL IMPACTS

The effects on people and the formal and informal economy are devastating

COVID-19 is hitting hard an already weak and fragile world economy. Global growth in 2019 was already the slowest since the global financial crisis of 2008/2009. COVID-19 has plunged the world economy into a recession with the potential of deep consequences and historical levels of unemployment and deprivation. Necessary measures to contain the spread of the disease through quarantines, travel restrictions and lockdown of cities have resulted in a significant reduction in demand and supply. Economic activities in transportation, retail trade, leisure, hospitality and recreation have been battered. And we have seen from plunging stock markets that public trust in the health response has direct and immediate economic effects.

The supply chain disruptions halting the manufacturing industry and the falling commodity prices, in particular oil, further compound the economic impact of the pandemic. This has rattled the financial markets, tightened liquidity conditions in many countries, created unprecedented outflows of capital from developing countries and put pressure on the foreign exchange markets, with some countries experiencing dollar shortages. Weak local currencies will constrain the government's ability for fiscal stimulus at the scale needed to stabilize the economy and to tackle the health crisis and human crisis.

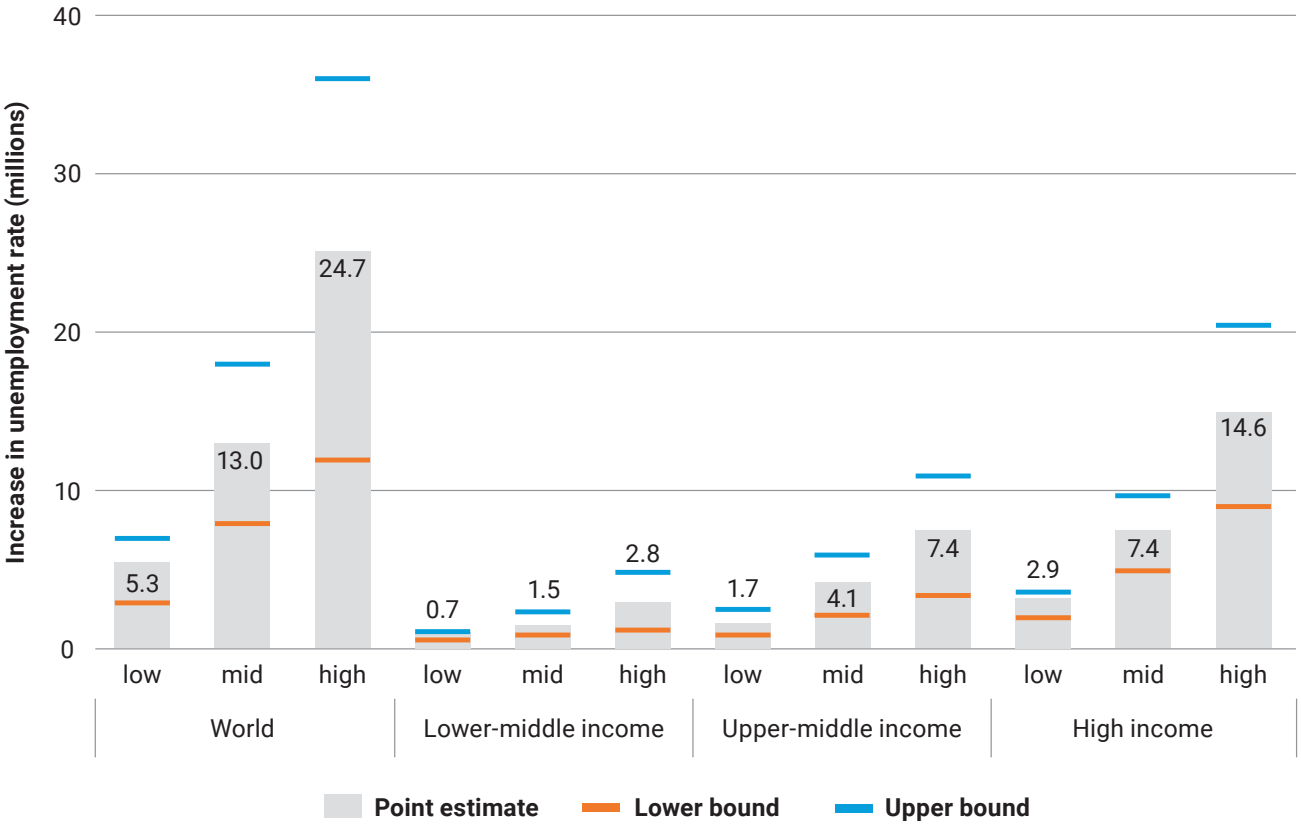
Figure 3 shows that according to ILO estimates, we could lose between 5 million and 25 million jobs and see losses in labour income in the range of USD 860 billion to USD 3,4 trillion. Small and medium enterprises, the self-employed, and daily wage earners are hit the hardest. The current crisis threatens to push back the limited gains made on gender equality and exacerbate the feminization of poverty, vulnerability to violence, and women's equal participation in the labour force. Migrants account for almost 30 per cent of workers in some of the most affected sectors in OECD countries. Massive job losses among migrant workers will have knock on effects on economies heavily dependent on remittances, such as El Salvador, Haiti, Honduras, Nepal, Tonga, Tajikistan and Kyrgyzstan. Effects are expected to be substantial in economies with a large informal sector, where often social protection systems do not exist or are limited, or, in the formal sector, exposed to market volatility.

The situation in developing countries, LDCs, LLDCs and SIDS in particular, is of special concern. The spreading of the virus to these countries will further weaken an already fragile macroeconomic picture, where debt accumulation has outpaced the growth of income even before the crisis. In addition, in some of these countries, the required hygiene and sanitation standards and social distancing measures are hard to implement.

The impacts are complex and affect us all

Tragically, the COVID-19 crisis risks reversing decades of progress in the fight against poverty and exacerbating already high levels of inequality within and between countries. Volatility, combined in some countries with market tampering and stockpiling, is starting to impact the prices of food, with deleterious effects on nutrition of the most vulnerable. Unless measures are promptly put in place, the disruptions imposed by the pandemic and the measures adopted to suppress the virus will dramatically worsen the situation. This is especially important in large least developed countries, where the degree of complexity of the crisis is likely to be further compounded by the significant size of the vulnerable population and the extent of the informal sector.

FIGURE 3: IMPACT OF DECLINING GLOBAL GROWTH ON UNEMPLOYMENT BASED ON THREE SCENARIOS, WORLD AND INCOME GROUPS (MILLIONS)



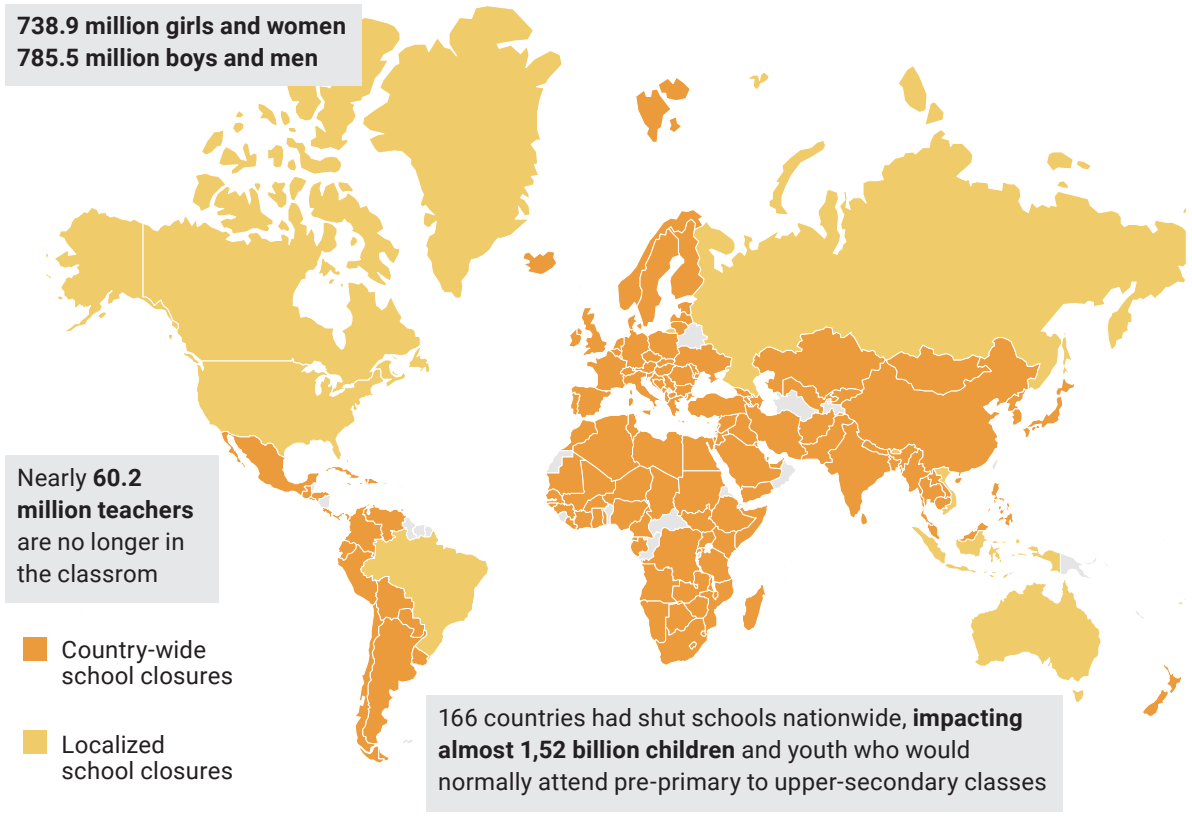
Source: ILO

In the education sector, 166 countries have implemented country-wide school and university closures. More than 1.52 billion children and youth are currently out of school or university, representing 87 per cent of the world enrolled school and university student population. In addition, nearly 60.2 million teachers are no longer in the classroom.

School closures have a wide range of adverse impacts on children and young people, including interrupted learning and forgone human interaction, which is essential to social and behavioural development. When schools close, many children lose the meals provided at school and a zone of safety. This impact on their nutrition has knock on effects on family income, which in turn adds to the demand for women and girls' unpaid work. The World Food Program (WFP) estimates that more than 320 million primary schoolchildren in 120 countries are now missing out on school meals. School interruption also causes gaps in childcare, which puts pressures on work and life balance, especially for women, and parents when asked to facilitate the children's learning at home.

Sustained disruption of education could lead to a rise in child labour and child marriage, placing a further brake on developing countries growth. A recent IMF paper showed that child marriages reduces low-income country GDP by 1 per cent.

FIGURE 4: COUNTRIES AFFECTED BY SCHOOL CLOSURES (AS OF 26 MARCH 2020)



Source: UNESCO

Digital technologies have become a positive enabler in this crisis, facilitating business continuity and connecting people more than ever and helping them maintain good mental health. However, inequality of access to broadband connectivity and inaccessibility of ICTs hinders effective remote participation and access to remote schooling arrangements, health information and telemedicine by all. According to ITU, an estimated 3.6 billion people remain offline, with the majority of the unconnected living in the least developed countries.

The response to the virus is also having a differentiated impact on segments of the population. The fact that women make up 70 per cent of the global health workforce puts them at greater risk of infection. Additionally, accompanying the crisis has been a spike in domestic violence reporting, at exactly the time that services, including rule of law, health and shelters, are being diverted to address the pandemic. With families isolated in their homes, children are also facing the rapid increase of online child abuse.

Older persons are not just struggling with greater health risks but are also likely to be less capable of supporting themselves in isolation. Homeless people, because they may be unable to safely shelter in place, are highly exposed to the danger of the virus. Persons with disabilities could be left without vital support and advocacy due to social distancing. Persons in prisons, in migrant detention centres or in mental health institutions could face higher risk of contracting the virus due to the confined nature of the premises.

Implications for the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement

The COVID-19 crisis is likely to have a profound and negative effect on sustainable development efforts. A prolonged global economic slowdown will adversely impact the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Figure 5 below illustrates some of the expected first and second order effects of the pandemic on SDGs implementation.

The most vulnerable, including women, children, the elderly, and informal workers, will be hit the hardest. The impact on the environment, on the other hand, is likely to be positive on the short term, as the drastic reduction in economic activity brought about by the crisis has reduced CO2 emissions and pollution in many areas. Such improvements are destined to be short-lived, unless countries deliver on their commitment to sustainable development once the crisis is over and the global economy restarts.

However, because of the size, scope and pace of the pandemic, and the sizable capital outflows from developing countries, there is currently a significant risk that most political capital and limited financial resources be absorbed by the response and diverted away from the implementation of the Nationally Determined Contributions to achieve climate targets and the Sustainable Development Goals. It is vital that in the response to the crisis, countries keep the sustainable development goals and climate commitments in focus to hold on to past gains, and in the recovery, to make investments that propel us toward a more inclusive, sustainable and resilient future.

Had we been investing – MDGs and SDGs – we would have a better foundation for withstanding shocks.

A hard truth is that we could have been better prepared for this crisis. The MDGs and the SDGs could have put us on track towards a world with access to universal health coverage and quality health care and more inclusive and sustainable economies. Instead, most countries have underinvested in health systems; facilities are insufficient for the level of the unexpected demand and rely heavily on imports. Most countries are characterized by weak, fragmented health systems that do not ensure the universal access and capacity needed to face the COVID-19 health crisis.

Political leadership and cooperation to combat COVID-19

At the geopolitical level, this crisis cries out for leadership, solidarity, transparency, trust and cooperation. This is no time for self-interest, recrimination, censorship, obfuscation or politicization. The tone set by leaders at the national and local level matters. While temporary border closures, travel bans or limits on the sale of critical supplies may be warranted in the short-term, such national-level measures must not impede a global coming together and global solution for all.

The COVID-19 crisis is threatening social cohesion within countries, as its impact reaches deep into our society, on the behaviour of individuals, and affects our well-being and mental health. Crucially, there is a risk for stigmatization of some groups wrongly considered "responsible" for the diffusion of the virus, and episodes of violence have been reported. Depending on the perceived effectiveness of the authorities' response to the crisis, trust in the institution of government and the political leadership may be eroded. The use of emergency powers and tools of surveillance technology to track the spread of COVID-19 must be non-intrusive, limited in time and purpose and abide to strictest protections and international human rights standards. While the risk of social disorders and riots is low, as economic and social conditions deteriorate, these are not to be ruled out, particularly in situations where social relationships are already strained by persisting income inequalities.

Close attention should be paid to the impact of COVID-19 in fragile political transitions and in countries already facing a rapid deterioration of security conditions, on top of weak health systems and climate change. This is particularly severe in Africa. The course of the disease is already impacting electoral calendars, including in settings where the UN is providing electoral assistance, with challenges in technical preparations, campaigning and/or polling.

FIGURE 5: COVID-19 AFFECTING ALL SDGS

Source: UNDESA

IV. SUSTAINABLE SOLUTIONS TO COPE WITH THE IMPACTS

Given the rate of infection expected, the final death toll of COVID-19 could take on dramatic proportions. The economic and social effects of the pandemic are likely to be well in excess of those of the latest global crisis in 2008. Only international coordination can prevent a worst-case scenario.

Overarching principles

Keeping all people, households and businesses afloat is the main objective. We need to focus on people — families, women, children, youth, persons with disabilities and the elderly, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises and the informal sector. Important steps have already been taken in this direction. This must be scaled up.

Extraordinary times require extraordinary measures. Economic policy should meet peoples most immediate health, food and other basic needs, protect social cohesion and maintain political and economic stability. Since the crisis is evolving rapidly, careful monitoring of the direct and indirect effects of all interventions are crucial to ensure policy responses are, and stay, relevant. A sense of urgency must prevail.

Specific measures are needed at different levels. International organizations, international financial institutions and leadership groups such as the G20 all have levers that must be activated to full effect and in a coordinated manner. A coordinated regional approach will enable collective examination of impacts, coordination of fiscal, monetary, and social measures and sharing best practices and the lessons learned. National actions are perhaps the most crucial, but they are dependent on context, including geographic context, type of government and level of development.

Developed and developing countries do not have the same resources to respond quickly to the pandemic and, among developing countries, there are significant differences between different categories of countries, such as Small island Developing States (SIDS), Least Developed Countries (LDCs) and Land Locked countries. Local governments are at the frontline of the epidemic but their capacity to respond rapidly depends heavily on the governance context and the financial health of the local government and its budgetary authority.

A whole-of-society approach is needed. COVID-19 is menacing all of humanity and all of humanity must fight back. An effective response needs to be multidimensional, coordinated, swift and decisive. It needs to be result of strong political leadership and buy-in of the population. It needs to foster public trust; be focused on human values; and supported by solid institutions, technical skills and financial resources. Everyone needs to play their part in the response. No individual country can do this alone.

ANIMATED BY THESE PRINCIPLES, THE UNITED NATIONS COMMITS TO WORKING IN ALL COUNTRIES AROUND THE FOLLOWING RECOMMENDATIONS:

A. Global measures to match the magnitude of the crisis

1. Advocate and support implementation of a human-centred, innovative and coordinated stimulus package reaching double-digit percentage points of the world's gross domestic product.

The global nature of the economic shock we are facing, with simultaneous collapses in both supply and demand, calls for the first truly global fiscal stimulus in history. Such a package would inject massive resources into economies and go a long way to restore confidence in the future.

That stimulus should be channelled not only to the business sector and lead firms, but to the workers and SMEs worldwide that underpin the global economy. It is not enough to protect major businesses: we need to protect their suppliers, and the global consumer demand – the household income – that will usher the global economy back to life. These need to be complemented with coordinated monetary and financial policy measures.

To be effective, the stimulus package will need to focus on direct and targeted transfer of resources to the most vulnerable households and scaling up health emergency preparedness, social protection, tax abatement, low interest rates, access to credit, insurance and wage support schemes. Support must be provided to countries that lack capacity to implement these measures.

Countries must commit to do their utmost to protect the labour force, including workers who depend entirely on daily earnings and those in the informal sector and support their employment and income. This must be the goal of all coordinated fiscal and monetary actions.

The International Organisation of Employers, representing more than 50 million companies, and the International Trade Union Confederation, representing more than 200 million workers, emphasise the importance of social dialogue and social partners in the control of the virus at the workplace and beyond, but also to avoid massive job losses in the short and medium term. Joint responsibility is needed for dialogue to foster stability.

2. Resist the temptation to resort to protectionist measures

This is the moment to dismantle trade barriers, maintain open trade, and re-establish supply chains. Tariff and non-tariff measures as well as export bans, especially those imposed on medicinal and related products, would slow countries' action to contain the virus. Import taxes or restrictions on medical supplies need to be waived. It is vital to ensure that such medicines, medical equipment and supplies and other essential goods and services needed to fight the pandemic reach the most vulnerable countries. Solidarity is crucial at this time.

3. Take explicit measures to boost the economies of developing countries

Developing countries need international support, given that their ability to fund expansionary stimulus is already limited, and has been further limited in recent days by currency instability. This will require debt relief for many countries to create the domestic fiscal space. This will also require creative thinking about how to mobilize large injections of concessional finance – not only from multilateral development banks but also from private lenders such as pension funds, who will be in a hunt for low-growth investment opportunities.

Forty-four per cent of least developed and other low-income developing countries are at high risk or in debt distress, making debt restructuring a priority —including immediate waivers on interest payments for 2020, debt deferral, debt reduction, debt swaps, and other debt reduction instruments. For fragile countries and conflict-affected countries debts may need to be cancelled. These resources should be immediately channelled towards the human and health response through budget support facilities, including to scale social protection. The IMF, the World Bank and other international financial institutions will be critical partners in this endeavour.

This will also require additional concessional financing. The IMF Catastrophe Containment and Relief Trust can help the poorest countries with immediate debt relief, but would need resources to be boosted by the support of the developed countries.

The cost of remittances — a lifeline in the developing world — should be brought as close to zero as possible.

4. Strengthen international public finance provision

International financial institutions and regional development banks can play an important role in addressing the impact of the crisis and financing the recovery. A post-crisis coordination mechanism must be created to provide the resources to all countries to have adequate fiscal space.

Coordination among major central banks and the support of international financial institutions could help facilitate swap lines and provide liquidity in the financial system, especially in emerging economies and developing countries. At the same time, the resources available to the IMF need to be increased, by leveraging Special Drawing Rights to rapidly inject resources into countries.

5. Waive sanctions in this time of solidarity

Sanctions imposed on countries should be waived to ensure access to food, essential supplies and access to COVID-19 tests and medical support. This is the time for solidarity not exclusion.

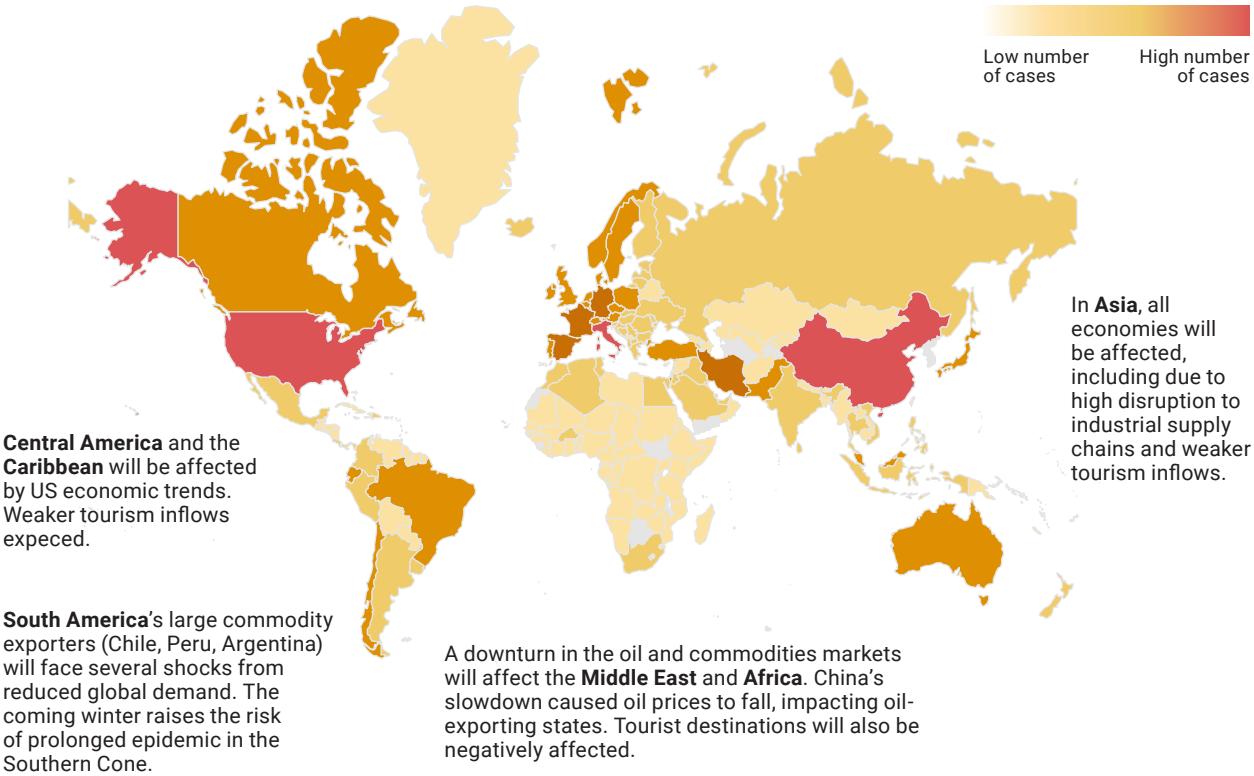
B. Regional mobilization

Some of the regional measures that can be taken, adjusted for regional specificity, are highlighted below.

1. Adopt "Do No Harm" trade policies, preserve connectivity, and ensure regional monetary-fiscal coordination

The free flow of goods and services within and across all regions is essential. Removal of tariffs and non-tariff measures affecting imports of

FIGURE 6: REGIONAL IMPACT OF COVID-19



Source: WHO, OCHA, EIU as of 27 March 2020

The boundaries and names shown and the designations used on this map do not imply official endorsement or acceptance by the United Nations.

essential medicines, medical equipment and related inputs is necessary to facilitate the cross-border movement of essential products. Innovative tools such as UN eTIR/eCMR systems and other tools that allow to exchange electronic information without physical contact and facilitate the flow of goods across borders should be used. Efforts should be made to maintain transit freight transport for landlocked countries and maritime connectivity of small island developing States that suffer more due to geographical disadvantage. In Africa it is important to maintain the momentum on the African Continental Free Trade Area (AfCFTA) as a mechanism for building long-term continental resilience and volatility management. Similarly, other regions should also leverage further existing and new commitments under regional trade agreements and mechanisms.

In a monetary union like the Eurozone, coordination and effective risk-sharing mechanisms are a necessity and should make possible a large fiscal push that is credible and lessens the divergences within the monetary union.

2. Engage with private financial sector to support businesses

Coordination at regional level to engage with the financial sector, including insurance companies, in finding solutions and aiding recovery through sustainable investments would be helpful. Platforms such as a special COVID-19 Taskforce to engage companies in a regional response to the outbreak should be put in place. The Global Investor for Sustainable Development Alliance of the Secretary-General also needs to be leveraged to support countries to mobilize financial and technical resources for the crisis response and recovery. The Secretary-General's High-level Panel on Digital Cooperation and the Task Force on Digital Financing for Sustainable Development can also be engaged to find creative solutions for businesses.

3. Address structural challenges and strengthen normative frameworks to deal with transboundary risks

The economic disruption created by the crisis is leading to a reconsideration of resource use and the fragility of supply lines. This opportunity needs to be used to strengthen approaches that enhance both resilience and efficiency, such as the circular economy, climate action and raising the ambition of NDCs. Similarly, robust and comprehensive environmental policies addressing priority transboundary issues may prevent and mitigate future pandemics, simultaneously banning trade of wildlife (which can contribute to health risks), harmonizing sanitary standards and addressing the interacting threats due to illegal trade, habitat loss, climate change, and different sources of pollution by developing collaborative policy frameworks.

C. National solidarity is crucial to leave no one behind

1. Undertake fiscal stimulus and support for the most vulnerable

Fiscal stimulus at a large scale is required with targeted measures aimed at providing assistance to individuals hit hardest by the spread of the virus. Measures may include a variety of means to preserve access to health and basic living conditions.

Cash transfers during the pandemic will help people to get through an inevitable recession. Social protection, including paid sick leave, saves lives and alleviates human suffering, while supporting people's resilience and contributing to economic recovery. In addition, many governments are seeking to strike a balance by assigning proportionate financial support to enterprises to retain workers – through time-bound financial/tax relief to support business continuity, employment retention schemes - and providing income support and employment services to all workers.

Women and girls must have a face in the response

- Collect sex-disaggregated data to ensure that the crisis does not disproportionately burden women.
- Ensure gender expertise in national, regional and global level response teams and task forces.
- Ensure that social protection plans and emergency economic schemes takes a gender perspective and takes into account unpaid care by women, specific constraints for women entrepreneurs and women in the informal sector.
- Attention to continued delivery of sexual reproductive health services, such as access to contraceptives without prescription during the crisis.
- Ensure that special services are available to prevent and respond to gender-based violence, such as special hotlines, police units and new protocols for shelters.
- Support women's organizations on the frontline and ensure women's leadership and participation in response plans in the short and long term.

2. Protect Human Rights and focus on inclusion

Protection of human rights and efforts to ensure inclusion are needed across the preparedness, response and recovery spectrum. Age, gender and migratory status are factors, among others, to be considered. While the virus has proven to be a real threat to all age groups, the elderly have been especially hard-hit, on average accounting for over 80 per cent of the infections. People with underlying health conditions and disabilities are equally at risk. A human-rights based approach to COVID-19 also implies ensuring that information is consistently available in readily understandable formats and languages, and adapting information

Human Rights and inclusion

- Ensure access to testing or treatment is not denied due to discrimination, whether on grounds of gender, age, religion, sexual orientation, ethnicity, race or otherwise.
- Monitor incidents of discrimination and xenophobia, and swiftly respond and publicize.
- Disseminate accurate and evidence-based information and conduct awareness-raising campaigns.
- Clear and timely information need to reach everyone, in particular national, ethnic or religious minorities, indigenous peoples, or LGBTI people.
- Access to additional financial aid for persons with disabilities and their families and ensure that persons with disabilities and under care, living in public and private facilities, are protected from neglect and abuse.
- Reduce populations in prisons, jails, and immigration detention centers through appropriate supervised or early release of low-risk category.
- Introduce moratoriums on evictions and deferrals of mortgage payments.
- Ensure that homeless people and those living in inadequate housing are not negatively impacted by virus containment measures.
- Adopt aggressive back to school strategies and create and employment opportunities for youth.

Young people, seriously affected, are joining the global response

Millions of young people work in global health workforce and the percentage is higher in the global south, in line with the overall demographics. Young people are already among the most affected by the socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 response:

- More than 1.5 billion young people, or 87 per cent the world's student population, are kept away from school and universities in more than 165 countries.
- Young people are particularly at risk of increased anxiety and mental health concerns.
- Young women and girls are at higher risk of intimate partner violence and other forms of domestic violence during the pandemic.
- Young people will suffer greatly from a global recession. After the 2008 crisis, youth unemployment rates in the UK reached around 21 per cent; around 18 per cent for the US; and in Italy, a record of 43 per cent in 2014. The expansion of the "gig economy" since 2008 has further increased youth vulnerabilities.
- Young people make up more than 30 per cent of the world's migrants and refugees who also stand to suffer disproportionately both from the pandemic and its aftermath – whether due to limited movement, fewer employment opportunities, increased xenophobia etc.

Young people all over the world are joining the global response against COVID-19 in many ways. Young people are running awareness campaigns, handwashing campaigns, volunteering to support the elderly and vulnerable populations, contributing as scientists, entrepreneurs and innovators.

for people with specific needs, including for the visually- and hearing-impaired.

While Governments have to take difficult decisions in response to COVID-19, including the use of exceptional state powers in many settings, leaders must take every measure to preserve civic and democratic space and help to build and preserve trust in institutions, and to stem rising xenophobia, discrimination, racism and stigmatisation. Internet companies have a responsibility to address disinformation in the first instance by themselves, providing reliable information. The use of tools of surveillance technology to track the spread of the coronavirus must be non-intrusive, limited in time and purpose and abide by the strictest protections and international human rights standards.

3. Support to SMEs

Direct support to enterprises, particularly to SMEs, is urgent. Governments can provide assistance to firms to maintain the flow of essential inputs, final products and services. Furthermore, special emergency public procurement procedures can be introduced, with dedicated attention to business opportunities for women and youth, and temporary assistance and transfers can be made to sub-national and municipal governments to support SMEs. In addition, consideration should be given to temporary reductions of payroll and social security charges, value-added taxes, and tax rebates. Finally, grants and subsidies, can facilitate the payment of rents and utilities, payment of wages and other essential services. Measures will need to be taken to support the informal sector, constituting 80 per cent of enterprises worldwide, who are generally out of reach of public policies.

4. Support decent work

Economic recovery goes hand in hand with social justice and decent work. International labour standards provide a tried-and-trusted foundation to inform policy responses that are coherent, respectful of human dignity and place recovery on the

trajectory set out in the 2030 Development Agenda. Subsidized short-time working, in the short-run, and hiring subsidies in the longer term must consider populations likely to be most adversely affected. Supporting young women and men can help combat the dangers of creating a lost generation of young people.

5. Support education

It is crucial that the international community support governments not only in providing distance learning solutions that use multimedia approaches to ensure learning continuity, but also in supporting teachers, parents and caregivers in adapting to home schooling modalities. Inclusion and equity must be the guiding principles to avoid a further deepening of inequalities in access to education, with special measures taken to jointly meet the health, nutrition and learning needs of the most vulnerable and marginalized children and youth, as well as policies to address connectivity and content challenges. The scale of the challenge calls for a coalition of public and private partners to design and develop innovative and equitable solutions adapted to a wide diversity of contexts. It also provides an opportunity to leapfrog, through these solutions, in addressing the significant challenges confronting countries while keeping in sharp focus the Sustainable Development Goals.

6. Prioritize social cohesion measures

Preserving and boosting social cohesion through free access to educational and cultural resources can be used to overcome social isolation. Investing in social cohesion is of special importance for countries experiencing fragility resulting from protracted conflict, recurrent natural disasters or forced displacement.

Preserve Quality Education for Children and Youth

- Distance education through: (i) access to loans or equipment transfers for students and/or households; provision of internet connection; and (iii) public-private partnerships to make platforms and tools for distance learning available free of charge.
- Public and private efforts to guarantee and expand the capacity of the networks and prevent demand surges. Governments and operators must have network demand analysis and contingency plans.
- Digital learning resources for teachers and parents: online multilingual free educational applications to facilitate learning, provide social care and interaction during periods of school closure.
- Publicize country efforts to maintain the provision of inclusive education in different contexts.
- If schools are open: ensure that social distancing measures, hygiene and food safety and quality standards are followed.
- If schools are closed, providing take-home rations in lieu of the meals, home delivery of food and provision of cash or vouchers.

V. PARTNERSHIPS TO ACCELERATE THE GLOBAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

Local and National Authorities

Local governments are at the frontline of the pandemic. The capacity of local governments to respond rapidly with the needed health and socioeconomic measures depends heavily on the governance context of the country and the financial health of the local government and its budgetary authority). Effective dialogue and coordination between local and national authorities are critical for implementing effective measures. Women and youth will be key to these dialogues at local levels.

If well resourced, local governments have significant power to catalyse and lead preparedness, rapid response and anticipate recovery policy actions for urban and rural populations. In the pre-outbreak phase, local governments and city officials can reference the lessons learned from governments that have responded to the outbreak and anticipate needs to prepare populations and systems.

Although the vast majority of national and local governments are currently focusing on pre-outbreak and outbreak planning, the most successful preparedness and response plans will have exit strategies and recovery plans in mind.

Global research and innovation

This is as much a crisis of confidence – occasioning a risk of panic and irrational behaviour – as it is a public health crisis. Evidence-based innovation will illuminate the path out of this crisis, and that requires rapid action by researchers and innovators worldwide.

Medical and technological research and innovation is needed to accelerate the production of key medical materials and tests, and to discover the vaccines and therapeutic treatments that are needed to protect people's right to health. Governments and leading research actors should come together to scale up cooperation with the WHO-sponsored solidarity trials, share data and information in the public interest, and deploy new AI tools to accelerate.

At the same time, the wider global research community – in government, academia and the private sector – also has a vital role to play, across the social and natural sciences, in policy formulation. It can generate, share and explain in lay terms the evidence that publics and policy actors need to take effective preventive measures and to shape a safe and equitable recovery. Many governments rely on new or established research advisory bodies bringing rapid evidentiary analysis to government response efforts. Major national and international research funders and philanthropic organizations should support the networking of these organizations to generate a reliable global research base to inform cooperative action at the international level.

Civil society and community-based organizations

Civil Society and grassroots organizations, community Based Organizations (CBOs) and Faith-Based Organizations (FBOs) play a vital role at the local level. In assisting the most vulnerable populations, these groups are active in bringing economic and livelihood opportunities and adapting responses to the community context.

These organizations, in many locations in the world, are the first, or only, point of reference for individuals and families about COVID-19. They serve as the main communication conduits about health mandates, hygiene practices based and quarantine measures. They are performing public services, including delivering food and medical services to

at-risk and low-income individuals and families, and ensuring that there are sufficient handwashing facilities in highly dense communities such as slums and informal settlements.

Women's organizations, operating with meagre resources, are often on the front line of community response – supporting those most affected economically by the crisis, ensuring shelters remain open for domestic violence victims, and channelling public health education messages to women. Expansion and capitalization of Funds such as the UN's Women, Peace and Humanitarian Fund or the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women must be encouraged as a means of scaling up support. Continuing dialogue and exchanges of information with existing networks is ongoing and crucial, and identification and engagement of additional civil society partners working on the COVID-19 crisis must also push forward.

Civil society organizations are also working to maintain social cohesion amongst individuals and families during the mandated periods of social distancing. During these periods, churches and community centres are offering virtual services, classes and counselling sessions and issuing regular communications via phone, SMS and online, in order to foster community and reduce feelings of isolation.

Youth networks and the world of influencers provide a new way of ensuring ownership and engagement.

VI. WE WILL OVERCOME THIS HUMAN CRISIS AND RECOVER BETTER

While we deal with the crisis, we must use the opportunity to recover better and build sustainable societies.

This crisis requires all of us to make hard choices. These choices will be easier to explain and easier to bear if we make them together. Governments taking action in lock step will find that their public will trust their responses and adhere to the onerous asks made of them.

And when we get past this crisis, we will face a choice – go back to the world we knew before or deal decisively with those issues that make us all unnecessarily vulnerable to this and future crises. Everything we do during and after this crisis must be with a strong focus on building more equal and inclusive societies that are more resilient in the face of pandemics, climate change, and the many other challenges we face.

We already know what we need to do. It is laid out in the global road map for the future - the 2030 Agenda, the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change. Countries need to be steadfast in moving forward with the implementation of these common commitments, especially investments in people, health and social protection systems, and seize the opportunity of a greener, more inclusive economy. These goals must shape our response and recovery, laying the foundations for resilient people and resilient societies.

In responding to the crisis today, we must learn the lessons of yesterday, so countries are better prepared for the days to come. It is clear the world needs a quantum shift in the approach and architecture in pandemic preparedness. WHO estimated that it will require 100 billion USD over the next 5 years to prevent and prepare for the next pandemic in 67 low and middle income countries and to build an interconnected Global Health Emergency System for data, workforce and supplies. Similarly, countries must increase spending on primary healthcare by at least 1 per cent of their gross domestic product if the world is to close glaring coverage gaps and meet health targets agreed in 2015. It must be done.

This crisis has brought home the precarious nature of today's economy for so many people. Billions of people are either not benefitting from the global economy – the 700 million in extreme poverty; the 1.3 billion without access to basic needs – or not receiving their fair share.

The crisis should reaffirm our resolve to fight inequality in all its forms and manifestations. Since the last global financial crisis, the world has witnessed income inequality rising faster than before. It is vital to work as aggressively after this crisis, not just to shore up the incomes and interests of the vulnerable and poor, but to do everything possible to end poverty and reduce inequalities.

People around the world need a reason to trust in their governments again. Out of this crisis, we should see the primacy of not just ensuring the children displaced by COVID-19 have access to education but go further and reach the 258 million children who remain out of school all year round. We should not stop at protecting the incomes of those affected by this crisis but put in place social protection systems to ensure everyone has a basic income. Let us rebuild our systems in a way that results in greater opportunities and equal outcomes for women and men. Let us not be content that people have washed their hands during this crisis but help ensure sustainable access to basic handwashing for the 40 per cent of the world's population without access to water and sanitation today.

This crisis also has brought into sharp focus the inadequacy of the global response to the climate and biodiversity emergencies. Despite committing to hold

the increase in global temperature to 1.5 degrees Celsius, the world remains on a dangerous 3 degrees pathway. Even at present levels of warming, the world is witnessing unprecedented super charged tropical storms, record-breaking temperatures, accelerated deforestation, droughts and wildfires and ever more grim predictions of sea level rise. This has resulted in significant loss of lives and livelihoods, and hundreds of billions in damage with the poorest and most vulnerable bearing a disproportionate burden.

The irony that the current crisis is resulting in lower emissions and cleaner air is not lost on anyone – not least because deforestation, pollution, biodiversity loss are all contributory factors to the spread of the virus. Governments should not respond to the COVID-19 crisis by making policy and investment decisions that exacerbate existing crises such as air pollution and the climate emergency. The New Climate Economy[4] report estimates that investing in bold climate action could deliver at least 26 trillion USD in net global economic benefits between now and 2030, including creating more than 65 million new jobs. While these figures may be adjusted on account of the impact of the pandemic, the prospects of this opportunity must be seized in stimulating the recovery. This year remains crucial for making progress on the climate emergency and in halting the loss of biodiversity.

Lastly, this crisis has for the most part, unearthed a human spirit, a level of solidarity, a new unity of purpose that has ebbed in this 21st century – within countries and communities and across our diverse world. The post-COVID world needs to take that spirit and energy forward. It needs to become the zeitgeist of our times. Not because it is preferable to unilateralism or isolationism, but because it is the only way we can stay together in this world – safe, free, healthy, prosperous and in harmony with the planet.

CALL TO ACTION

The COVID-19 Pandemic is a defining moment for modern society, and history will judge the efficacy of our response not by the actions of any single set of government actors taken in isolation, but by the degree to which the response is coordinated globally across all sectors to the benefit of our human family.

The United Nations global footprint at the national level is an asset for the global community to be leveraged to deliver the ambition needed to win the war against the virus.

With the right actions, the COVID-19 pandemic can mark the rebirthing of society as we know it today to one where we protect present and future generations. It is the greatest test that we have faced since the formation of the United Nations, one that requires all actors -governments, academia, businesses, employers and workers' organizations, civil society organizations, communities and individuals- to act in solidarity in new, creative, and deliberate ways for the common good and based on the core United Nations values that we uphold for humanity.

[4] The New Climate Economy, the Global Commission on the Economy and Climate, 2020.

The United Nations Sustainable Development Group, through coordinated action and in solidarity with countries, come together to implement this UN response to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

DPPA
United Nations Department of Political Affairs

FAO
Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations

IAEA
International Atomic Energy Agency

ICAO
International Civil Aviation Organization

IFAD
International Fund for Agricultural Development

ILO
International Labor Organization

IMF
International Monetary Fund

IMO
International Maritime Organization

IOM
International Organization for Migration

ITC
International Trade Centre

ITU
International Telecommunications Union

OCHA
Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs

OHCHR
Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

UN DESA
United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs

UN ECA
United Nations Economic Commission for Africa

UN ECLAC
United Nations Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean

UN Environment
United Nations Environment Programme

UN ESCAP
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific

UN ESCWA
United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia

UN PBSO
United Nations Peacebuilding Support Office

UN Women
United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women

UN-Habitat
United Nations Human Settlements Programme

UNAIDS
Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS

UNCDF
UN Capital Development Fund

UNCTAD
United Nations Conference on Trade and Development

UNDP
United Nations Development Programme

UNDRR
United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction

UNECE
United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

UNESCO
United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

UNFPA
United Nations Population Fund

UNHCR
United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

UNICEF
United Nations Children's Fund

UNIDO
United Nations Industrial Development Organization

UNODC
United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime

UNOPS
United Nations Office for Project Services

UNRWA
United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East

UNV
United Nations Volunteers

UNWTO
United Nations World Tourism Organization

UPU
Universal Postal Union

WFP
World Food Programme

WHO
World Health Organization

WIPO
World Intellectual Property Organization

WMO
World Metereological Organization