

# Global Think Tank Town Hall: Saving Lives and Livelihoods

April 7, 2020

## Report





## Think Tanks & Civil Societies Program



**The Lauder Institute**  
*The University of Pennsylvania*

### **ABOUT THE THINK TANKS AND CIVIL SOCIETIES PROGRAM (TTCSP)**

The Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program (TTCSP) of the Lauder Institute at the University of Pennsylvania conducts research on the role policy institutes play in governments and civil societies around the world. Often referred to as the “think tanks’ think tank,” TTCSP examines the evolving role and character of public policy research organizations. Over the last 30 years, the TTCSP has developed and led a series of global initiatives that have helped bridge the gap between knowledge and policy in critical policy areas such as international peace and security, globalization and governance, international economics, environmental issues, information and society, poverty alleviation, and healthcare and global health. These international collaborative efforts are designed to establish regional and international networks of policy institutes and communities that improve policy making while strengthening democratic institutions and civil societies around the world.

### **ABOUT THE LAUDER INSTITUTE**

The Lauder Institute of Management and International Studies offers an M.A. in international studies and conducts fundamental and policy-oriented research on current economic, political, and business issues. It

organizes an annual conference that brings academics, practitioners, and policy makers together to examine global challenges such as financial risks, sustainability, inequality, and the future of the state.

## **ABOUT THE UNIVERSITY OF PENNSYLVANIA**

The University of Pennsylvania (Penn) is an Ivy League school with highly selective admissions and a history of innovation in interdisciplinary education and scholarship. A world-class research institution, Penn boasts a picturesque campus in the middle of Philadelphia, a dynamic city that is conveniently located between Washington, D.C. and New York, New York the University of Pennsylvania was founded by Benjamin Franklin in 1740 to push the frontiers of knowledge and benefit society by integrating study in the liberal arts and sciences with opportunities for research and practical, pre-professional training at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Penn is committed to meeting the full demonstrated need of all undergraduates with grant-based financial aid, making this intellectually compelling integration of liberal and professional education accessible to talented students of all backgrounds and empowering them to make an impact on the world.

# Acknowledgments

The Town Hall and this report would not be possible without staff and support Centre for International Governance Innovation. We are grateful to them and to all our partners, who make it possible for the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program to advance its mission.

## **About CIGI**

**The Centre for International Governance Innovation is an independent, non-partisan think tank whose peer-reviewed research and trusted analysis influence policy makers to innovate.**

Additional thanks to the India Team at the Think Tanks and Civil Societies Program.

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**CORONAVIRUS (COVID-19)**

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### Overview:

The COVID-19 crisis has been a catastrophic global emergency. Everything has changed, and there is much uncertainty about the challenging reality of what lies ahead. As the virus continues to spread, reinforcing national boundaries, Think Tanks have a vital role to play in fostering global solidarity and innovative collective models for policy planning and advancement.

To begin shaping a way forward, we need to find an economically and socially viable path that is structured around safeguarding lives and livelihoods. This notion emphasizes the need to solve the virus and preserve the economy first, rather than reimagining the future, post-pandemic. Collectively, to navigate the crisis, strategic thinking should center around: Response, Resilience, Recovery and Reform.

On April 7<sup>th</sup>, 2020, over 300 Think Tank executives and scholars from 170 institutes in 60 countries registered for the Global Town Hall on Saving Lives and Livelihoods. Participants were invited to respond to the COVID-19 crisis and the new and unprecedented policy problems our communities and countries will face in the coming months -in addition to the existential challenges it presents to Think Tanks.

Townhalls build trust and confidence; they bring people together to create a sense of community, while also motivating and preparing members to act.

The objectives of the Town Hall were clear:

- To share the strategies and skills that are necessary for crisis management, decision-making and fundraising
- To understand how Think Tanks should redirect institutions, staff and research programs to meet the new and radically altered policy environment
- To mobilize and support Think Tanks around the world so they can better serve policymakers and the public in the countries where we operate

Think Tanks have demonstrated their ability to produce high quality policy research and shape popular and elite opinion and actions for public good. In times of crisis, citizens look to traditional actors and rely on experts for reliable and trustworthy information -the time is now to seize the moment to facilitate the dissemination of expertise and intellectual leadership. Together, as a knowledge sharing network that stimulates innovation and growth, Think Tanks have the convening power to work with influential communities, civil societies, and individuals alike to build actionable insights.

While the crisis has required social distancing, we need to be a global community and look at creative ways to attack this pandemic. Taking advantage of opportunities to connect virtually will

be key to advancing the continued relevancy and success of Think Tanks around the world. When stakeholders look to Think Tanks for research and innovative policy solutions, organizations must be ready with information and easily digestible strategies for government, civil society, and private sector decision makers.

### **Moving Forward:**

The Townhall highlighted the following ‘next steps’ in establishing a Global Think Tank partnership response to COVID-19:

#### **1. Formulating a Shared Response:**

- There was broad based support to issue a **joint statement** highlighting Think Tanks commitment to improving people’s lives and livelihoods through evidence-based policy recommendations. Together, Think Tanks should express their diverse, yet interwoven ideas and goals to provide a coherent and integrated strategy centered around **Response, Resilience, Recovery** and **Reform** to lead through this crisis.
- The pandemic has simultaneously jeopardized the economic well-being of citizens and institutions demonstrating that resilience is a vital necessity. Public, private, and social sectors alike will need to make difficult decisions that will be crucial to balance economic and social sustainability. These responses need to determine the scale, pace and depth of action required, in order to rethink the speed and global coordination with which they need for reform and recovery.

#### **2. Establishing Interdisciplinary Working Groups:**

- A proposal was made to establish **5 interdisciplinary International Working Groups** that center around:
  - a. The Public Health Crisis:** As an example, this group will discuss issues related to the acceleration and augmentation of multinational cooperation in research and the development of drugs, vaccines, testing devices and other medical products, to achieve rapid breakthroughs that will immediately benefit the international community.
  - b. National and International Economic Recovery Strategies:** This group will focus on understanding the economic outcomes and possible interventions to rebound the livelihoods of workers, while also stabilizing financial systems. It will also address deficits and revenues that could arise for national governments and ways forward.
  - c. Innovative and Inclusive Intervention Public and Private Strategies to Help Vulnerable Groups:** As an example, this group will discuss issues such as how to advance policy frameworks that allow technology to be used in a manner that mitigates the spread of

COVID-19, while also respecting human rights, limiting potential abuses, and combatting disinformation campaigns.

- d. **Fostering International Cooperation –Creating Rapid, Responsive, and Resilient Systems to Respond to Future Crisis:** As we face the current wave of the virus and potential near-term future waves, we cannot forget that the high likelihood of more viruses could be even more devastating and disruptive. This group will focus on future global and local preparedness and cooperation.
  
- e. **Fit for Uncertain Future -New Operating Models for Think Tanks Research, Communications and Funding:** This group will discuss Think Tank survival strategy with respect to how Think Tanks can continue to operate efficiently during an economic crisis, how to manage relationships with partners, donors and allies, as well as how to approach fundraising in the new circumstance.

### 3. Maintaining Momentum:

- To ensure our network stays motivated and connected, there was significant support for holding joint virtual events and webinars to facilitate collaboration and productivity. In an era of increased global challenges and opportunities, Think Tanks with a national and/or regional focus will need to think and act more globally, via new partnerships with Think Tanks from other parts of the world to initiative new collective models of policy planning and advancement. Internal measures and practices will need to be implemented to facilitate future collaboration and productivity of teams.

### Town Hall Discussion Sessions:

Think Tanks were asked to submit questions in advance of the meeting to help guide the discussion; for example, some of these questions included:

- How can Think Tanks remain relevant and financially sustainable during a deep economic crisis, like the one being inflicted by COVID19? How should Think Tanks better manage the relationship with partners, donors and allies?
  
- What role can Think Tanks play to promote global solidarity at a time when the pandemic is reinforcing national boundaries and externalizing the medical, economic, social, and political impacts of COVID-19?
  
- In the new working and political environment, how can Think Tanks go beyond just moving events online and ramping up digital content and digital marketing, and make real, sustainable changes that not only help their survival, but also help them realize real and lasting impacts on our changed world?

- How can we make global and national responses to the pandemic and associated global socioeconomic challenges more strategically targeted and proactive instead of reactive to spontaneous developments?

### **Panel I: Opening President's Panel**

During the opening panel discussion, leaders from Think Tanks based in North America, South America, Europe, the Middle East, Africa, Southern and Southeast Asia provided proposals for addressing health, economic, social and security issues raised by the COVID-19 pandemic and suggested strategies for how Think Tanks can continue their existing work and reorient to make a difference in these difficult and uncertain times.

#### *Think About Today, Plan for Tomorrow*

Think Tanks need to respond rapidly to changing circumstances in order to deliver meaningful and relevant content to their audiences. Organizations must also consider recovery and reform strategies for the future, specific to their institutional goals and audience. Beyond health policy research, there is an immediate and long-term need for Think Tank research on the multitude of issues that are arising from this crisis; for example trade, digital security and civil liberties have and will continue to be impacted by COVID-19.

#### *Creating New Relationships and Maintaining Virtual Communities*

Think Tank leaders discussed the need to work with civil society to build new, perhaps unlikely, relationships. Municipalities and local organizations are at the forefront of this crisis and can provide raw data for research institutions to translate into tangible policy recommendations and strategies for stakeholders. Think Tanks should work to enable and empower local actors as much as possible to achieve their objectives.

Digital communities are now being built out of necessity, but participants underscored the importance of maintaining and contributing to these virtual communities in order to share information and provide support. The cross-nation sharing of knowledge is crucial, and unified responses will be the most effective.

#### *Advocate for International Responses to COVID19 Crisis*

Responses by forums such as the G20 will either highlight their institutional relevance in managing multi-faceted crises or mark them as immaterial.

Conflicts have arisen both within and among countries as a result of measures to contain the spread of the virus. The health and economic consequences of the pandemic will create new conflicts and exacerbate existing ones. Participants raised issues of stigmatization and discrimination, deterioration of trust between institutions and citizens, state transgressions on human rights, an increase in domestic and gender-based violence and rising levels of livelihood insecurity. It is critical that Think Tanks conduct research and provide early warnings to

governments in relation to these areas of conflict. They should also consider the opportunities for reform to ensure institutions and systems are more resilient in the future, such as by designing new health care systems, funding mechanisms, and providing opportunities for more workers to be included in the formal labour market.

### Address Inequality

COVID-19 has highlighted inequalities not just among individuals but between countries. Nations are looking inward and working to provide safe and stable societies for their own citizens. However, the world outside their borders cannot be ignored. Refugees, internally displaced persons and those living in the poorest nations where healthcare systems have already collapsed will suffer the greatest effects of this pandemic. All countries are grappling with the health and economic consequences of COVID-19, but global support for the most vulnerable members of society must be a priority. The Think Tank community can facilitate this by providing governments with research on these trends, and **by releasing a joint statement emphasizing the importance of global humanity.**

### **Panel II: Policy Strategies and Proposals**

The second session focused on the policy responses and programs that will be required to tackle the growing social and economic challenges of the COVID-19 crisis. Experts who represented countries such as Italy, the United Kingdom, Guatemala, the United States, Pakistan, Kenya, Saudi Arabia, France and Spain were convened in an effort to foster creative solutions that seek to build global solidarity for the current and future needs of society.

### Building Resilient Global Policy Responses

One of the common themes throughout the discussion recognized the need to build solidarity at the global level. Times of crisis underscore the importance of international cooperation. We are all experiencing the devastating social and economic impact of this catastrophe. When addressing a major health crisis, public health information cannot be dominated by medicine and epidemiology alone. We need social science responses that empower our structures to be resilient in the world ahead, and we need actionable insights for policymakers to use that will work quickly and effectively. A critical question raised during the panel was “what, if any, liberal order will come out of this crisis?” **There is a need to organize working groups across sectors to coordinate ideas that will facilitate cohesive responses.**

### Proposals to Create Social Cohesion

Panelists focused on how we can enable our structures and systems to become more resilient to the social and economic shocks of this pandemic. While COVID-19 has required social distancing, this should not impact the convening power of Think Tanks to collaborate and build actionable insights for response, recovery and renewal.

Regarding proposals to promote health resilience, we need to empower medical services to test effectively and achieve recovery for those infected. To do so, proposals should highlight the need to invest in public health systems and social security systems. In order to do this, governments must bring informal workers, self-employed and freelance workers into the fold of social assistance. Secondly, there is a need to invest in public health systems to increase the number of healthcare professionals and improve unequal access to medical treatment. Another aspect critical to health resilience is the need for restructuring of supply chains to ensure access to critical medical supplies. Universal medical coverage was also discussed as a potential solution.

Moreover, we must keep in mind that in the face of a pandemic, other emergencies do not take a break. Hospital patients will continue to need lifesaving blood; those living below the poverty line will still need food, shelter, and care, and vulnerable communities worldwide will still need humanitarian assistance. We need to advise governments to take decisive actions quickly and secure the lives and livelihoods of those indirectly suffering from this crisis.

The COVID-19 pandemic will significantly increase global unemployment, pushing millions of people out of work and sending many into working poverty. There will be a fundamental need to redesign job programs and retrain workers for the economy ahead. We will need a social compact with the contingent workforce in our society who were left in a fragile state and are now the ones keeping our countries working and fed - suggesting reform in the ways we assist lower wage workers. Leading countries will need to continue working quickly and decisively to coordinate and deploy financial packages to minimize the global impact to the economy.

There is also a strong need for G20 leaders to set timelines on policies with respect to rapid social and economic recoveries that seek to preserve financial stability. It is recommended that immediate action be taken to alleviate the financial stress of countries who had major financial outflow and to enhance global liquidity. One of the panelists expressed the need to keep the financial market open and fair, enhancing global trade operations by lowering tariffs - especially on personal protective equipment (PPE) and medical supplies. Such work to preserve global trade is critical in this crisis, as many leaders are looking to close borders and move towards a more isolationist stance.

Ultimately, we cannot only anticipate risks, we must manage them. This crisis is affecting the whole world, but the impacts are very different among and across countries, with stark best and worst-case scenarios emerging. One panelist suggested that we need technologies such as apps, big data and artificial intelligence to help identify risks and to manage this crisis. For example, some countries such as South Korea, China and Taiwan -to name a few- have used mobile location tracking to identify where an infected person traveled before being quarantined and how many people they might have been in close proximity to, as well as apps to self-report symptoms. While location tracking has been used to widely limit the spread of the virus, many countries with stricter laws on data protection have been hesitant to adapt such approaches and there are always issues around overreach, abuse, and curtailing use once the emergency is over.

### Panel III: Impact and Survival Strategies for Think Tanks

This panel focused on solutions Think Tanks can implement to adapt and survive the institutional effects of COVID-19. The conversation featured panelists from Slovakia, Serbia, Haiti, Israel, China, the United States, and the European Union. One persistent theme shared was the need for global solidarity both now and post-COVID-19.

One way to demonstrate the solidarity of Think Tanks from around the world **is to issue a joint communiqué, highlighting Think Tanks' commitment to improving people's lives and livelihood through evidence-based policy recommendations. A working group or commission that includes the perspectives of each continent could be a mechanism for continuing this conversation.**

#### *Use of Technology*

The use of technology to communicate and disseminate Think Tank research is currently the most beneficial option. Think Tanks should use technology regularly and effectively to share with the public relevant and useful research and information. The use of videos and infographics are examples of tools that are easily digestible to a wide array of stakeholders. However, it was noted that Think Tanks should still consider streamlining communication channels to avoid overwhelming their audiences and collaborating with Think Tanks within their area of specialty. Continuity was also noted as a key feature in keeping audiences engaged. For example, limiting one-off events and shifting to a series format instead so that stakeholders have a reason to return.

The increase in the use and necessity of utilizing technology has also facilitated the way we communicate with other Think Tanks and donors. For example, one panelist noted that individuals are increasingly accessible through virtual platforms due to ease of access, in contrast to physical meetings, which reinforce inequality due to economic and time constraints.

#### *Importance of Networking*

Global Think Tanks play an important role as one of the few players focused on global research and solutions, while many others are thinking locally or nationally. There is an opportunity to captivate a new audience, with one panelist reporting the highest traffic to date on their Think Tank's website.

#### *Relevant and Responsive Research*

Think Tanks must be thoughtful about COVID-19 research, and for some Think Tanks, research agendas will need to shift. Characteristics which will define the success of Think Tanks during this crisis are speed and ability to think bold and long-term.

#### *Fundraising and Maintaining Relationships*

Financial cushioning is important for times like these. The reality is some Think Tanks may not be able to recruit new donors or bring in additional funding during and/or after this crisis. In parts of the world, namely Africa and Latin America, new sources for funding will continue to be especially

difficult. There is, however, a unique opportunity that presents itself for Think Tanks – communicating our work and illustrating our impact. In other words, showcasing our research and the direct results of that research on people’s lives.

Maintaining regular communication with donors and reminding them of why the Think Tank mission is important and relevant will be essential. For instance, Think Tanks will need to set the right tone to engage and renew current and prospective donors during this time when social distancing is mandatory, and the economy is volatile. Ideas from Think Tanks about the world post-pandemic should be optimized and forward-looking.

#### People-Centered Management

Professional management that creates a sense of confidence, trust, and safety among staff was highlighted as key for Think Tank survival. For example, some panelist expressed that internal polls within the institute that evaluated the needs of individual employees, helps paint a bigger picture of what was needed for employee support.

#### **Panel IV: Closing Remarks – A Call for Think Tanks to Save Lives and Livelihoods**

The Global Think Tank Town Hall concluded by focusing on five central themes for Think Tanks to prioritize in their ongoing work plans: leadership, communication, technology, security, and resiliency. It was noted that as information and policy “tsunamis” spread at warp speed, Think Tanks must become stronger, smarter, and faster in responding to the crisis and helping the most impacted sectors of the global population. There was a resounding consensus among participants that Think Tanks *can* and *will* rise to meet this challenge.

It was noted that while COVID-19 brings devastating consequences for every facet of human life, Think Tanks are presented with the unique opportunity to realize their full purpose and potential during these turbulent times. Think tanks have the capacity to work through these issues while many governments around the world are overburdened and under-resourced. **If the global Think Tank community can work collaboratively there is a tangible opportunity to create a value-added playbook for policymakers for the post-COVID world. For this playbook to have lasting policy impact, Think Tanks must account for the five key principles identified during the Global Think Tank Town Hall and consider the recommendations below:**

#### On Leadership

- Think Tanks must overcome the inherent competition structure in order to unite and support the common goal of creating concrete solutions for policymakers.
- Interdisciplinary focus and strong leadership signals from Think Tank founders, directors and their communications departments will be key to the success of any joint initiatives that are undertaken.

### On Communication

- Think Tanks must be mindful not to inundate audiences with communications that simply amount to white noise. Strategic communications that provide easily digestible pieces will be taken up most readily by traditional and perhaps non-traditional audiences. Streamlining communication channels is a necessary effort for all Think Tanks to undertake.
- A joint communiqué on saving lives and livelihoods in every continent could be a concrete next step. This communiqué could be published as a global commission to express the diverse yet interwoven ideas and goals of Think Tanks, providing a coherent and integrated response to the crisis.
- Shifting communication to online platforms has provided an innovative opportunity for Think Tanks to connect and communicate as never before. This opportunity should be harnessed to **create an ongoing collaborative network between and among international Think Tanks** to support each other during this crisis and beyond.

### On Technology

- COVID-19 has caused an international shift in the way we work and communicate as private citizens and global organizations. The future of work will be unalterably changed as we emerge from this crisis, which may have lasting positive and negative effects. These effects should be reviewed and researched by relevant Think Tanks, and policy recommendations made readily available.
- The government's use of surveillance and tracking measures to combat the virus amount to extraordinary powers in the social, health, military and communication sectors. While these powers may be necessary in the short term for risk mitigation, we must as Think Tanks take a closer look at the civil liberty tradeoffs/erosions and how these powers can be rolled back at the appropriate time.

### On Security

- Malicious cyber-attacks are on the rise. As previously noted, it is not enough to anticipate risk, it must be managed. Think Tanks can be instrumental in providing early warning to governments and civil society regarding online and physical threats to national and personal security. If Think Tanks can carefully work through these issues and pinpoint targeted solutions, we can help governments and institutions reprioritize spending.

### On Resiliency

- Regarding institutional resiliency, it was echoed by nearly every panelist that a Think Tank's single greatest asset is its staff. Investing in staff, ensuring they feel valued and are mentally and physically healthy is crucial.
- Regarding international resiliency, it was noted that flexibility and agility must be built into every global institution, business, policy decision and social network in order to meet the

goal of rapid, effective response. Those who are not able to build-in these elements will not regain their footing quickly and may not survive. Models for resiliency should be studied as an area of policy insight.

In closing, panelists unanimously agreed that innovative Think Tanks are more crucial now than ever before. Catalytic efforts such as the Global Think Tank Town Hall allow connection across networks and disciplines to create concrete global results.

As with all world-moving crises, from September 11<sup>th</sup> to the great depression, the greatest impact is on the next generation. How we as families, communities, organizations, nations and global coalitions act now will inform how resilient or risk averse the next generation will be. If Think Tanks are to be at the center of this effort, global institutional cooperation will be needed.



#### **GLOBAL THINK TANK TOWN HALL PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS\***

African Centre for the Constructive Resolution of Disputes ACCORD (South Africa)

Al Jazeera Center for Studies (Qatar)

Argentine Council for International Relations in Buenos (Argentina)

Asian Development Bank Institute (Japan)

ASIES (Guatemala)

Asia Society Policy Institute (United States)

Atlantic Council (United States)

Baker Institute for Public Policy, Rice University (United States)

Bahrain Center for Strategic, International and Energy Studies (Bahrain)

Belfer Center for Science and International Affairs, KSG Harvard University (United States)

Brookings Institution (United States)

Bruegel (Belgium)

Cannon Institute for Global Studies (Japan)

Carnegie Middle East Center (Lebanon)

Carnegie India (India)

Center for American Progress (United States)

Center for Economic and Social Research (Poland)

Center for European Policy Studies CEPS (Belgium)

Center for Global Development (US)

Centre for International Governance Innovation CIGI (Canada)

Center for Policy Research (India)

Center for Strategic and International Studies (United States)

Center for Strategic and International Studies (Indonesia)

CIDOB (Barcelona Centre for International Affairs) (Spain)

Chicago Council on Global Affairs (United States)

CIPPEC (Argentina)

Clingendael (Netherlands)

Egyptian Center for Economic Studies (Egypt)

Ecologic Institute (Germany)

Economic Research Institute for ASEAN and East Asia (Indonesia)

Elcano Royal Institute (Spain)

European Policy Centre (Serbia)

Getulio Vargas Foundation FGV (Brazil)

Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (Germany)

Fraser Institute (Canada)

Gateway House (India)

Globsec (Slovakia)

Groupe de recherche et d'analyse appliquées GRAAD (Burkina Faso)

Heritage Foundation (United States)

HORN International Institute for Strategic Studies (Kenya)

Hudson Institute (United States)

Institute for Global Cooperation and Understanding (iGCU) at Peking University (China)

Institute for World Economy and International Relations IMEMO (Russia)

Institute for National Security Studies (INSS) (Israel)

Institute Montaigne (France)

Institute for International Political Studies ISPI (Italy)

Japan Institute for International Affairs (Japan)

KAPSARC (Saudi Arabia)

King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (Saudi Arabia)

Kenya Institute for Public Policy Research & Analysis KIPPRA (Kenya)

Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (Germany)

LSE IDEAS (United Kingdom)

McCain Institute (United States)

McKinsey Global Institute (United States)

Mercatus Center at George Mason University (United States)

Mexican Council of International Affairs (Mexico)

Middle East Institute (United States)

Nepal Economic Forum (Nepal)

Norwegian Institute of International Affairs (NUPI)

Our Hong Kong Foundation (Hong Kong)

Observer Research Foundation (India)

Policy Center for the New South (Morocco)

Prospect Foundation (Taiwan)

RAND Corporation (United States)

Russian International Affairs Council RIAC (Russia)

Sejong Institute (Republic of Korea)

Singapore Institute for International Relations (SIIA)

Stimson Center (United States)

Thailand Development Research Institute (TDRI) (Thailand)

TEPAV (Turkey)

Urban Institute (United States)

Yangon Centre for Independent Research (YCIR) (Myanmar)

**\*Those institutions highlighted in red have joint the Planning Committee for 2<sup>nd</sup> Town Hall**

**PANELISTS' AND PARTICIPATIONS' RESPONSE TO THE FIRST TOWN HALL MEETING ON APRIL 7, 2020**

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In this moment, when political leadership is being literally crippled by COVID-19, think tanks have a critical role to play in informing policymakers and, ultimately, guiding humanity towards a safer and brighter future. Indeed, our community has never been more important than it is today, and as with so many things, we're stronger together. The severity of the global COVID-19 crisis is unprecedented, and we must – together as a community – rise to the occasion. **John Allen, President, Brookings Institution (United States)**

“COVID-19, which has appeared primarily as a health crisis, seems to stay with us for some time to come until vaccines or medicines are discovered and properly distributed. But the global socio-economic crisis, unprecedented in recent history, it triggered will have even long lasting effect. The global network of Think Tanks have crucial role to play in the global and local efforts to mitigate the impact of the crisis on lives and livelihoods by advising policy makers to make informed decisions.” **Mulu Gebreyesus Senior Fellow – Policy Studies Institute (Ethiopia)**

“Think tanks and global thought leaders like those in the Global Think Tank Town Hall play a critical role in informing and assisting policy makers in developing solutions to save both lives and livelihoods during crises like the COVID-19 pandemic. It's reassuring to know there's a global network that shares their expertise to address the tough issues we face.” **Kay James, President and CEO Heritage Foundation (United States)**

“It’s time for think tanks to show that they really matter when it comes to solving people’s problems. If think tanks want to survive this major crisis, they must show capacity of rapid adaption in order to deliver immediate and effective solutions. This is what the first edition of Global Think Tank Town Hall to Save Lives and Livelihoods has delivered: a great opportunity to fulfill our goals. FGV thanks TTCSP for this major contribution. We’re looking forward for the next Town Hall”. **Marlos Lima, Director for International Affairs at FGV (Brazil)**

“T20 Saudi Arabia is committed to bringing evidence-based policy recommendations to the attention of the G20 leaders on timely and relevant issues for G20 and non-G20 countries. To that end, the T20 community has responded to the current crisis, precipitated by this ongoing pandemic, by creating a special task force that will investigate the impact of COVID-19. As the T20 platform is formally nested within the G20 framework, it provides global think tanks with the opportunity to present multiple perspectives to G20 leadership, while respecting everyone's views. I would like to emphasize that the T20 has always valued an inclusive, democratic and open process of collating ideas, which is what makes it credible and legitimate.” **Fahad M Alturki – Chair, T20 Saudi Arabia (Saudi Arabia)**

“The importance of the G20 became more pronounced in a fight against a different kind of contagion, financial contagion. There will be no bigger challenge than the economic fallout from coronavirus. While it is an imperfect organization, the G20 will need to balance discussion and action. It is a grouping of the most significant economies in world, and has two that must speak to each other to make progress -in this time of crisis they may have no choice.” **Rohinton P. Medhora, President, The Centre for International Governance Innovation.**

“With the spread of COVID-19 to Europe and the USA, many are reacting late and with a sense of panic. While national governments must act, consultation and dialogue are critical in managing cross border flows of people, medical equipment and other essentials. In our region, ASEAN needs to move and work with other partners in the global effort against a global pandemic. Think tanks are nudging governments to give attention to priority issues and to take the right steps.” **Simon Tay, Chairman, Singapore Institute for International Affairs (Singapore)**

“The COVID-19 pandemic is a health crisis of massive proportions and will have major long-term social, economic and political impacts in countries all over the world. Think tanks globally have an absolutely vital role to play in generating the diverse and collaborative knowledge, action and leadership needed to bring an end to the outbreak and build back more equitable and sustainable societies.” **Professor Melissa Leach, Director, Institute of Development Studies (IDS)**

“In most countries, existing inequalities and the urgent need to reduce them have been exposed. The crisis caused by COVID-19 is a important call to Think Tanks around the world to work hand in hand with governments and other sectors of society in the formulation and implementation of public policies and programs to face the damage and achieve the resilience that sustainable development demands.” **Gabriell Duarte, Researcher, ASIES Guatemala)**

"Even as we struggle to cope with the COVID19 pandemic, the world is also confronted with an 'infodemic'. Fueled by old and new media platforms, flurry of misinformation has made it virtually impossible to get to the truth. It is crucial for Think Tanks such as ours to double down on their principle responsibility, cut the clutter, and ensure public discourse remains rooted in evidence." **Samir Saran, President of Observer Research Foundation (ORF)**

"Our world is being tested by the unprecedented crisis caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. Whether or not the international community can overcome this challenge in the spirit of cooperation and partnership will speak volumes about the future world we will live in. It is heartening that the global network of leading think tanks and thought leaders assembled at the Global Think Tank Town Hall are committed to pooling their expertise and resources in search of a truly collaborative response." **Wang Dong, Executive Director, Institute of Global Cooperation and Understanding (iGCU), Peking University (China)**

“In these challenging times, we have all had to adapt to the role that befalls us to protect the health and welfare of our communities and nations. This collective responsibility has come at a dire cost, but one I am certain we are all prepared to bear. I am inspired by the way in which the think tank community has come together, with kindness, strength and concern for the common good. Such an initiative as the Global Think Tank Town Hall gives me great confidence that we will get through this, together – as we always have.” **Karim El Aynaoui, managing director of the Policy Center for New South PCNS (Morocco)**

The COVID-19 pandemic is a universal threat to the Earth. Figuratively speaking it could be compared with extraterrestrial attack. That provide a unique opportunity for promoting cooperation in a post-Corona world. However, blind following the old “end of history” narrative could bring the world order to the new bipolarity of the XXI century. This path dependence substantially decrease not only post-Corona economic growth recovery, but also humanity resistance to the future pandemics, as well as climate change prevention. Forthcoming online and planning offline meetings of G5 leaders (Permanent members of UN SC) could potentially slightly reverse this contra-productive trend towards divided world. Hope, that Town Hall I report could make some valuable suggestions for those events. **Alexander Dynkin, President, Primakov IMEMO, (Russia)**

“Our experts at the Urban Institute are asking what it would take to **respond** in the short-term to help people and communities in crisis; to **recover** economically and socially –

recognizing that many were left behind in the recovery from the last great American recession; and finally, to become more **resilient** to global health, economic, climate and other shocks, even as we seek to prevent them. “This crisis is landing unfairly and disproportionately not just on the most vulnerable among us, but also on the people who are essential to our economy and collective health. Most of all, COVID-19 reveals our nation’s long history of discrimination, which is baked into the fabric of our society.

“Moving through this crisis means that we must rebuild the social compact between us, using actionable insights and data so that we understand impacts in real time. It will also require that we work across sectors to target solutions effectively – and finally address the underlying structural inequalities laid bare by this crisis.” **Sarah Rosen Wartell, President, Urban Institute (United States)**

“In dramatic times when international cooperation appears next to impossible we should always remind ourselves that the League of Nations, the UN and the Bretton Woods institutions were all the product of deeply dramatic periods. We emerged from those crises stronger, with the renewed sense that cooperation is crucial if we want to avoid (or at least limit) tragedies. Think tanks play a critical role in assisting policy makers in developing sound and feasible patterns of cooperation. The Town Hall showed the incredible value and intellectual richness of our community is just a starting point, but all great journeys start with a single step.” **Paolo Magri, Executive Vice President and Director, ISPI (Italy)**

“The COVID-19 pandemic is resulting in unprecedented social, economic, and political dislocations across Africa. The ensuing security and development challenges will be complex and will require accurate information and knowledgeable analysis. Think tanks will therefore have to be at the forefront of providing evidence-based research, analysis, and policy advice to allow decision-makers to respond pro-actively and timeously to save lives and manage scarce resources”. **Vasu Gounden, Founder and Executive Director ACCPRD (South Africa)**

“The Covid-19 crisis should prompt us in the think tank community to act as leaders in our countries’ civil societies, by engaging in partnerships which can provide structure and voice to those organizations that are not well-positioned to speak to the policymakers. By gathering the voices of citizens and civil society organizations directly engaged with citizens, we can turn their concerns into policy proposals which can in turn help (or make) our governments improve their response to this crisis, whether we speak of crisis-management, economic relief or social protection measures. At the same time, this crisis is also our opportunity to check how adaptive, how financially resilient, and how well-organized and well-managed our think tanks are. In sum, we should harness this big disruption to become less detached from our civil societies, more responsive to the needs of the citizens and become better employers for our staff.” **Milena Lazarevic, Program Director and co-founder, European Policy Centre – CEP, Serbia**

"This crisis has brought out both the best and the worst amongst peoples and nations. Our job as committed citizens of the world must be first to hold our own governments to

account, but secondly never to lose sight of the simple but obvious fact that the only solution to this crisis - and the many others we face - is through greater international cooperation and a recognition of our common humanity, rather than retreat behind ever higher walls and closed borders". **Michael Cox, Founding Co-Director of LSE IDEAS and Professor of International Relations**

"With COVID-19, Africa is learning many lessons. Among the most crucial lessons, there is the need to deeply rethink the continent's development models. This necessarily involves a change in development paradigms and original models that are better fitted to the realities of the African continent. In this sense, Think Tanks have a central role to play. But this role can only be truly assumed as a group. It is in this way that this Global Think Tank Town Hall initiative makes sense. I have confidence in the future thanks to this group philosophy". **Gountiéni Damien Lankoandé, Executive Director, Groupe de recherche et d'analyse appliquées (GRAAD Burkina), Ouagadougou (Burkina Faso)**

"Humans are part of both the natural and the social environment. We have an obligation to create and protect an environment that fosters well-being and resilience. We have to do so in the face of the Corona crisis, in the face of the climate crisis, in the face of the many challenges this modern, crowded, beautiful planet faces. This is why the recovery and stimulus packages around the world must be forward looking, embrace the changes we want to see, and build a future we want to live in." **Camilla Bausch, Scientific & Executive Director of Ecologic Institute**