

Implications of COVID-19 for Public Health and the SDGs

- **Dr. Antoni Plasencia**

1. Which testing strategy is best; testing all in the community or prioritizing suspected cases based on travel history and/or contacts? And by what criteria can you measure if a country is doing enough testing?

If you do not want to run after the cases, testing should be done to as many as possible in the community, given the very large number of asymptomatic or very mild symptom cases. I would suggest using the example of South Korea and their standards for testing quality and quantity as a reference for testing efforts.

2. It seems that molecular tests are very important to avoid spreading the virus, do you know anything about the new CRISPRcas12 tool reported in Nature Technology this month, and its potential?

I am not an expert in diagnosis, but it seems a potential alternative to RT-PCR.

- **Ms. Mercedes Garcia Perez**

1. Are any steps being taken for a potential “second wave” or a second surge in cases as we may begin returning to normal?

All efforts will be directed to avoiding new waves, but we know that the gradual relaxation of containment measures will unavoidably lead to a corresponding increase in new cases. The whole purpose of the Joint European Roadmap towards lifting COVID-19 containment measures is to plan for the restart of the economy while minimizing the impact on people's health and avoiding overburdening the health systems.

Actions should be continuously monitored and we should be prepared to return to stricter containment measures if necessary. The Commission will task the European Center for Disease Control to develop advice on future lockdowns in view of a possible resurgence of the disease and taking into account the lessons learned so far.

2. What is the impact of South-South and/or triangular cooperation?

EU Development Ministers on 8 April agreed to support partner countries' efforts to fight the pandemic through strengthening health systems and mitigating its socio-economic effects. The EU and its Member States are collectively assembling more than 20 billion for external assistance in development and humanitarian aid. These will be implemented in full cooperation with partner countries and also non-governmental actors, UN Resident

Coordinators, and other multilateral institutions such as WHO and WB/IMF.

3. How is the EU envisioning governance of the green/clean investment and stimulus funding once in place? Will this be at the EU level or is this something that the Member States are going to be asked to govern directly?

The European Green Deal responds directly to the aspirations of EU citizens as clearly expressed during the recent European Parliament elections in 2019. To deliver the European Green Deal, there is a need to rethink a number of policies across the economy, industry, production and consumption, food and agriculture, construction, taxation and energy. The EU will make use of all policy levers: regulation and standardization, investment and innovation, national reforms, dialogue with social partners and international cooperation. Member States also have a big role to play, from setting ambitious National energy and climate plans to facilitate the production and deployment of sustainable alternative transport fuels.

- **Dr. Laurence Boone**

1. Someone commented that “Life needs to go on to benefit the larger share of the population.” Many people who have been laid off are in severe situations, unable to pay rent and buy food. Based on the charts you showed about the effects of different levels of lockdown on the economy, what do you advise, or how do you balance different needs?

We advise to develop testing, tracking and isolating, as well as protecting the most vulnerable, respecting social distancing, hygiene measures, so that economic activity can gradually return. Regarding some activities where this is difficult, there will remain the need to respect some shutdown for longer. As developing countries, LIC and some EMEs do not always have the means to address the pandemic, international cooperation will be of the essence to support them and help fight the virus everywhere.

2. How is current oil price volatility taking into account recovery scenarios?

Lower oil prices benefit oil importers, while negatively affecting oil exporting countries.

- **Dr. Maximo Torero Cullen**

1. Which levers can FAO use to make sure the large exporting countries you cited, such as Russia or Vietnam or Kazakhstan, lift their export restrictions to African countries? Especially if the epidemic lasts more than a year.

1) FAO hosts the AMIS which has allowed us to inform the world of the availability of cereal stocks and harvests this year. Making the world know that there are sufficient stocks and production allows governments to make better decisions and indirectly help

to prevent any potential hoarding measures by key exporting countries. Why is this? Countries will not buy when hoarding occurs because they know stocks are big and therefore at some point the country hoarding will have to release.

2) At the political level we have done several joint statements with WTO, WHO, and in all work streams of the G20 requesting no export restrictions be put in place by key exporting countries, given there was no reason to do so because of the stocks availability and good harvest in 2020.

3) Finally, at the bilateral level we try to work with countries to avoid this from happening.