



Crises: economy, society, law, and culture Towards a less vulnerable humankind

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INTRODUCTION

The current COVID-19 pandemic, and systemic crises such as climate change, reveal deep-seated structural fragilities and criticalities in the material and cultural spheres of world societies. However, crises entail opportunities if they induce awareness of the challenges confronting humankind as a whole and stimulate the transformations needed to achieve less vulnerable societies. This statement focuses on present-day fragilities and challenges and aims to highlight and strengthen the role of coordination between local, national, and international actors to increase resilience at a global scale.

1. GLOBAL CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES

The increased interdependence between countries, cultures, and economies has been a distinctive feature of the last decades. Achieved through the expansion of communication, trade, international division of labour, international education, increased cultural sharing, and financial linkages, this interdependence has vastly increased opportunities for the countries, regions and sectors that could benefit from it. However, many could not reap those advantages or were negatively impacted.

The COVID-19 pandemic and climate change disruptions have shown that interdependence makes crises arising in some countries or regions to quickly spill over, destabilising vast areas and potentially the way of living worldwide. The fragility of interdependent economies and societies has been exposed, for example, in financial markets instability and increased indebtedness, struggle for resources, large-scale reduction or misuse of common goods, supply-chain challenges, and uncontrolled migrations, particularly severe in those countries most affected by this phenomenon.

However, increased interdependence can become a powerful instrument for controlling and mitigating systemic vulnerability, provided that countries are able to coordinate their actions acknowledging that vital conditions for human survival and well-being are at stake. No single country, however large and powerful, can effectively implement solutions to global crises, such as the COVID-19 pandemic, future pandemic outbreaks, climate change disruptions, and widespread food shortages. The G20 states have a major responsibility to lead a response to systemic challenges that urgently require measures reducing vulnerability and increasing resilience at the world scale.

2. FRAGILITIES AND RESILIENCE: TOWARDS A LESS VULNERABLE HUMANKIND

The impact of the COVID-19 pandemic has shown that worldwide interdependence by itself does not guarantee resilience: parts of the world fully integrated in global networks of communication and trade have not been less affected than areas at the margin of globalisation. In many cases, the crisis has brought to light fragilities that have built up over time. Inequality in the distribution of income and wealth has greatly increased, leading

to a weakening of social cohesion. Public and political responsibility has been reduced under the influence of narrowly identified economic and political objectives. In many cases the provision of, or access to, public goods has declined, and the sustainability of human interaction with the natural environment has greatly suffered. In several cases, compliance to uniform cultural standards worldwide, not mediated by a thorough knowledge of and adaptation to local contexts, has hampered the mutual understanding of different traditions. Respect for cultural diversity, including for indigenous peoples, together with respect for fundamental human rights, must be seen as a necessary condition for maximising the resilience of world societies.

Global interdependence can provide a stepping-stone to greater resilience if fragilities are addressed through coordinated actions. Primary instruments are those that reduce social and economic inequality, increase the provision of public goods, improve environmental and health protection, enhance education and the reciprocal awareness and respect of different cultures, thereby building a community of shared future for humankind.

Actions in the above-mentioned areas require coordinated efforts by high-level public actors to achieve global resilience. The G20 states have the opportunity and the duty to lead humankind through the structural transformations needed to face global crises.

3. AN ACTION MAP: GLOBAL COORDINATION FOR SYSTEMIC CRISES

An integrated set of concerted actions are proposed in the cultural, social, economic, and legal fields, to promote mutual awareness of different historical trajectories and cultural traditions, counteract inequality, and promote social cohesion, foster the coordination of legal frameworks, and implement resilience-oriented economic and social policies.

3.1. Education and research

- Practices that ensure equal opportunities in education between countries should be promoted.
- Education should foster the integration of local history, na-

tional history, and global history, and promote demonstrative reasoning and scientific validation as critical tools against dissemination of false or unverified news. The study of history in a broad and anthropological perspective, far from being an irrelevant comparison of local events and narratives, has a key role in understanding past, present, and future crises, as well as in exploring sustainable ways to meet the challenges confronting humankind.

- Research and research evaluation systems should promote a much-needed integration between natural and technological sciences, humanities, and social sciences: as the COVID-19 and climate change crises are showing, interdisciplinarity has a fundamental role to play in determining the effectiveness of research to deal with systemic crises and support policy actions tackling global challenges.

- Fundamental research in all fields of knowledge should be promoted and mainly supported by sufficient public funding to advance all areas of enquiry, and to enhance scientific creativity and innovation. The substantial involvement of Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences is necessary to properly address societal, environmental, climate, and health challenges. Special attention must be given to the advancement of both theoretical and applied knowledge of the structural transformations and policies needed to achieve less vulnerable and more resilient social and economic systems.

3.2. Cultural heritage

- Knowledge, mutual understanding, and respect of cultural heritage should be a priority of national governments and intergovernmental cooperation.
- National and regional policies should foster local communities' awareness of their heritage and the active participation of citizens in its enhancement and protection. A recommendation to G20 governments is to promote education and dissemination of cultural heritage knowledge in all its forms (historical and archaeological heritage, indigenous, cultural and linguistic traditions, as well as live creative practices, such as performing arts) as a tool to make people aware of and involved in their own histories and traditions, material and immaterial. This can be achieved through schools and universities, museums, and

other public institutions, and will enhance the contribution of cultural diversity to an enriching and sustainable development of human societies. Learning and respecting other histories, cultures, and languages can reduce intolerance and give people the tools to interact with each other as world citizens, mitigating racial and ethnic antagonism.

- The development of digital technologies, and fostering widespread access to them, should be enhanced to enable universal awareness and sharing of world heritage, even in times of crises.

3.3. Social policy and legal harmonisation

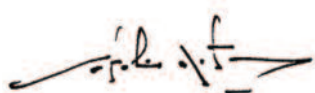
- National policies should promote social cohesion by tackling educational gaps between socioeconomic groups, genders, age groups, and territories; implementing urban and regional policies aimed at addressing problems arising from rural poverty and rapid urbanisation, especially in mega cities; opposing social and territorial marginalisation, including the digital divide, particularly in the vast rural areas of developing countries; integrating culturally different groups and fostering inclusiveness. International aid in the social policy field should acknowledge that uniform solutions are unlikely to successfully address the needs of vulnerable groups across the world, and that effective policies often require a contextualised approach.
- Fundamental human rights to make lives sustainable in a healthy, equitable and secure social and natural environment should be universally recognized and pursued at local, national, and international levels.
- International coordination should promote research efforts and policy measures aimed at increasing social preparedness to pandemic outbreaks and other world-scale crises. An international research initiative aimed at investigating the comparative social and economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis and responses to it is strongly recommended to better understand the conditions for a mature and well-planned social and cultural policy to deal with current and future crises.
- International coordination should promote universal, free, and timely availability of vaccines as public goods and other life-saving medical devices and means of protection from pan-

demics. Measures should be taken to increase the effectiveness of the global health architecture in which the World Health Organization (WHO) must play a central role.

- Intergovernmental coordination should reduce excessive differentiation of taxation regimes. Measures should be taken to ensure that taxation of corporate incomes is kept within an internationally agreed range, with special reference to the digital economy.
- A global normative framework must be promoted to achieve broader internet access and public governance of communication worldwide, enhancing cybersecurity to prevent unlawful cyberspace activity. This measure is essential for global connectivity to increase the resilience of world society.
- Intergovernmental cooperation should identify and implement effective legal protection of global commons and essential resources.

3.4. Economic actions

- In international trade, countries should avoid policies protecting their domestic economies at the expense of other countries, while acknowledging that different opportunities are afforded to countries as a consequence of the different timings, conditions, and historical contexts of their development processes. The World Trade Organization (WTO) should act according to these principles and its dispute settlement mechanism should be strengthened.
- International coordination to reduce the vulnerability of supply platforms that are essential for resilience is strongly recommended.
- International coordination should promote economic policies that focus not only on growth of gross domestic product (GDP) but also on material and social resilience, universal access to credit facilities, and equity across genders, social groups, and generations.
- A global crisis platform based on international participation and governance should be explored, as a means to provide the liquidity needed to support and coordinate the emergency measures needed to address systemic crises.



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