The pandemic bared many old and new problems, both global, regional and internally national in almost all countries.

More than ever, the contradictions between globalists and anti-globalists have strained. Globalists insist that globalization is irrevocable and should be taken for granted, and argue that global goals can be achieved through joint efforts, and global risks, like the current pandemic, could be overcome only through global partnerships. Anti-globalists count, that the only effective way to stop the COVID-19, caused by globalization, is isolation and self-protection.

Pandemic demonstrated that we are now interdependent, interconnected and interlocked as nations, as individuals in a way which has never been before. Global interdependence and interconnectedness are all kinds of intertwined chains. Rupture of one link can lead to rupture of the entire chain. And the most important link in this chain is the responsibility of each actor to the global community. Look what happened: someone intentionally or not hid the truth about the virus at an early stage of its appearance. Due to the most important element of globalization - free movement of people around the world - the virus instantly enveloped the entire planet. To protect their population, countries began to close their borders. All kinds of transportation business fell sharply, which in turn hit the tourism business and international trade. Transport paralysis led to a reduction in fuel consumption, which affected the oil business and caused price fever. Stocks Exchange reacted immediately.

The current crisis brings back memories of the recent recession of 2008-2009 and of course raises the question of whether the world will slide into the Great Depression of the 30s. The corona-virus crisis is already called the largest economic shock in a hundred years. It's true, but at the same time I agree with the famous Ukrainian economist Yuriy Gorodnichenko (1) that the hope remains that the scale of the Great Depression will not be achieved if we learn the lessons of the 30s. Namely: we will not try to balance budgets during the crisis, develop gold standards and will not liquidate enterprises instead of supporting the business. The Great Recession made it clear that fiscal stimulus should be much more serious. Hope that the United States understands this; in Europe, as we see,
The pandemic has unleashed a health and economic crisis unprecedented in scope and magnitude and demonstrated the inability of global community to resist it. It is still fresh in the memory of what the world expert community noted 11-12 years ago regarding the interdependence of world events: Lehman Brothers goes down (2008) – the whole lot collapse; If you get Swine Flu in Mexico (2009), it’s a problem for Paris Charles De Gaul Airport 24 hours later. But it seems that we did not learn the main lessons from the past crisis. The principal problem around the ongoing pandemic is the inefficiency of the global management system. Institutions of global governance created by the results of WW2, including the UN, the Bretton Woods structures, WHO, appeared unable to withstand the challenges of the 21st century. In the late 1940s, it was somehow possible to recognize that a powerful state could solve most problems on its own, or at least protect itself from their worst consequences. Today, no state, no matter how powerful, can labor under the illusion that it can guarantee success in protecting its population from such threats as pandemic and other global challenges which the former UN secretary-general Kofi Annan called “problems without passports.”

Unfortunately instead of looking the collective way out the world powers even more intensely began to accuse globalization and each other of what had happened, thereby complicating the world situation even more.

Pandemic intensifies US-China competition for global leadership. Beijing is helping many countries, mainly developing in Africa, fight the coronavirus pandemic by pursuing its global goals. I would recommend to look at Dang Yuan’s article in Deutsche Welle (3) who claims that support from China’s communist government during pandemic to the world around has its moral downsides. The article says that many health systems around the world, especially in less developed countries, are affected by extremely high rates of infection and rely on prompt international assistance. These countries are particularly willing to accept generous aid from China. As far as China is concerned, this all fits in with its master plan for working its way up to the top of the world order, where the US has left a vacuum after reducing its international cooperation, such as in various UN institutions. China, with its financial power, is moving into the gap and gaining increasing heft on the global political stage. Beijing’s stated aim is to form an alliance among developing countries so that they can become independent from their former colonial masters—both economically and politically—and strike out in new directions. But, in fact, China is itself seeking hegemony, although it would, of course, never admit it (Ibid).

While world leaders are conflicting humanity is at war against an invisible and yet powerful enemy - COVID-19. But even though the coronavirus has turned billions of lives upside down with unprecedented restrictions on personal freedoms, economic activity and public life, COVID-19 has not put the world’s existing political differences on pause. The ongoing tensions between the US and China, the diverging interests of the West and Russia, the seemingly endless crisis in the Middle East and in Africa—the pandemic has merely provided all of these with a new battleground in long-running wars of information as Matthias von Hein rightly noted (4).

Russia attacked first: On January 22 Russia’s “Sputnik News” wrote that the virus was man-made, it was a weapon created by NATO. This was the first piece of false information in many languages concerning COVID-19.

Beijing echoed Kremlin on March 12 declaring that the virus had broken out in the US. European External Action Service (EEAS) in its internal report states that the efforts of global actors like China to deflect blame, to use the pandemic to promote their own governmental system and enhance their image abroad continue (5). Some experts (Matthias von Hein, Ibid) discovered that disinformation was flourishing in its own “ecosystem” giving examples when a Russian outlet publishes a falsehood, it is often picked up next by Chinese media. These subsequent reports would then be retweeted by Russia, as if they had come directly from China. The claim that there are clandestine US biological laboratories on the territory of “former Soviet republics” has been spread both by pro-Krem lin outlets as well as Chinese officials and state media. Multiple Russian state-controlled media channels, including RIA Novosti news agency and RT explicitly defended China in face of international criticism of handing the COVID-19 outbreak.

Iran’s spiritual leader, Ayatollah Ali Khamenei has joined China and Russia in their claims that the coronavirus is a US bioweapon.
Washington reacted immediately accusing China of withholding information on the virus and of knowingly spreading false information on the source of the pandemic. Many countries expressly state that COVID-19 is a “Chinese virus.” Today, more than 120 countries are demanding an investigation, some of which have already begun lawsuits against China in their national courts.

EUAS in its internal report has also tracked a stream of disinformation about COVID-19 from Russian media. The EUvsDisinfo’s database now contains nearly 500 examples of COVID-19-related pro-Kremlin disinformation. Report notes that pro-Kremlin sources, are still involved in spreading disinformation, including by amplifying existing conspiracy theories, which link the COVID-19 pandemic to biological warfare, 5G technology and fuel anti-vaccination sentiment. Russia’s campaign is designed to “exacerbate confusion, panic, and fear”. Report says that “The overarching aim of Kremlin disinformation is to aggravate the public health crisis in Western countries, specifically by undermining public trust in national healthcare systems – thus preventing an effective response to the outbreak”. The report says that pro-Kremlin media are not authoring most of the misinformation themselves, and instead are “amplifying theories that originate elsewhere”, such as pro-Kremlin media, which claim the virus was created by humans and “weaponized” by Western countries (EEAS, Ibid).

EUvsDisinfo notes that on the one hand, pro-Kremlin disinformation outlets claim that the outbreak is a hoax. On the other, they indulge apocalyptic scenarios, suggesting that due to the pandemic the Schengen system has collapsed, NATO will dissolve, the EU is paralysed, the Baltic states are doomed, there are no doctors in Lithuania, and Ukraine is in free fall. The entire project of “globalisation” is over! The coronavirus is the EU’s Chernobyl. But then the whiplash comes again: The virus is not dangerous at all. It can be cured with saline in five days, what’s the problem? According to the conclusions of EUvsDisinfo, the disinformation arm of the Kremlin aims to undermine solidarity during a crisis that calls for trust and cooperation.

“Fake news spreads more quickly and more easily than the virus, and can be just as dangerous.” - WHO director-general Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus stated at the 2020 Munich Security Conference.

On February 2, the World Health Organization (WHO) warned of a massive coronavirus “infodemic “ (as for me, a new term in the theory of international relations).

On May 21 UN launched a new initiative aims to push back against the tide of lies and hate that has risen in tandem with the COVID-19 pandemic, by empowering people worldwide to share accurate information to help save lives and promote global solidarity.

All these three calls should be heard by the world community, because EUvsDisinfo, unfortunately, is right - disinformation can kill.

On April 23 The Economist published an article “Would-be autocrats are using COVID-19 as an excuse to grab more power”. Let’s take a quick look at this phenomenon with the help of the Economist. Having been born in a Soviet authoritarian state, I agree that the current authoritarian regimes cannot be fully compared with the totalitarian regimes of the last century. Nonetheless, the COVID-19 crisis is undoubtedly used by the ruling elites in individual countries with populist, illiberal, undemocratic tendencies in their current evolution. A pandemic for such regimes is a convenient reason for restricting public rallies, meetings of opposition parties, tightening control over media publications, and for transferring responsibility for spreading a pandemic to external migration. Some examples.

Hungarian Prime Minister Viktor Orbán appeared under EU critics for taking full power and effectively suspended all prerogatives of the legislative branch. As early as March, when the virus situation in Hungary began to escalate, Victor Orban personally linked the coronavirus epidemic to migrants, the pinnacle of his triumphant election campaign in 2018. This narrative seems to be the basis of the 2022 electoral campaign.

From media we know that ruling Turkish leadership is using pandemic to suppress the mayors of the major cities elected from the opposition party and who are organizing fundraising to mitigate COVID-19 - an action which strengthens role of opposition

I agree with professor Joshua Busby (7) from Taxes University that “In authoritarian countries, such as Russia, China, Belarus, the leadership does not want to tell the truth. There are no independent media outlets that could report a problem. And this only exacerbates the crisis”.

Today most countries in the world accuse China of hiding information about the virus in its initial stages. Against the backdrop of the pandemic, China passes a national security law, which in turn aims to suppress ongoing protests in Hong Kong.

For most of the spring, the official line from state media was that Russia had nothing to worry about. The coronavirus was happening somewhere else, in Europe and Asia and the United States, but not in Russia. That’s no longer believable. As of May 22, Russia is in second place after the United States in number of infections — 317554 cases. And those are just the official statistics.

Brazilian populist rulers have refused to take the coronavirus pandemic seriously, even though more than 20 thousand Brazilians have already died from the virus. And the number of cases continues to grow exponentially.
On Saturday, May 9, in the capital of Belarus, Minsk, life-long president Alexander Lukashenka held a parade to mark the end of World War II in Europe - Victory Day. Participants in that mass event did not wear masks. I wonder how such an experiment can be conducted during a pandemic? It seems that the answer is: Victory Day means more to the Belarusian power holders than the lives of people. This reminded me of the coercion of Kiev to a march at the May Day parade in 1986 a few days after the Chernobyl disaster. It was an act of stupidity, if not the criminal intent of the Soviet leadership, for which human life was worthless.

As the COVID-19 virus spreads around the globe, international criminals are looking for ways to exploit the fear and uncertainty surrounding the virus to generate profits. Interpol on its official site calls on the international community to come together to confront such international crimes as counterfeit medical products, fraud and cybercrime. Interpol observes that international criminals are exploiting the rapidly increasing demand for supplies such as masks, gloves, wipes and sanitizers through selling low quality or counterfeit products. Fake “coronavirus medicines” are being offered, which have been found to contain harmful substances. The crisis has created convenient conditions for intensifying international cybercrime. Interpol launched awareness campaign on COVID-19 cyberthreats informing that international cybercriminals are registering website domains which include the words “covid 19”, “coronavirus” and related terms to carry out phishing campaigns, spread malware or to compromise Command and Control servers.

The ongoing pandemic has exposed many global ethical concerns. Of course, hiding the truth about the nature of the virus at the very beginning of the appearance of information about it is an unacceptable challenge to global ethics.

From the media we got a sad news about the death of Dr. Li Wenliang, and how he was detained and reprimanded for raising the alarm about a novel infectious disease.

In his article of March 19, 2020 Sridhar Venkatapuram (8) accented on a number of ethical dilemmas that pandemic brought to the forefront:
- For health care workers caring for sick coronavirus patients a problem has arisen, how to allocate scarce resources?
- In many countries frontline medical staffs have faced a dilemma throughout the COVID-19 crisis: Which patients should be treated first when resources are stretched to the limit? Should you save as many patients as possible, or save patients with the most urgent need?
- Scientists around the world are working quickly to develop vaccines for COVID-19. For government leaders pushing for a vaccine a question appeared: Who gets the first shot when one becomes available? Vaccine development is important, but, once vaccines are available, the distribution of a vaccine is also an important ethical question. If vaccines are also distributed in a similar way as masks, gloves and diagnostic kits have been distributed, poorer countries will unfortunately get the vaccines last (8, Ibid)).

Concluding my remarks on global ethics caused by pandemic I would like to doubt and raise the question - is withholding information about the initial stage of the spread of the corona virus exclusively a challenge to the ethical principles of global human society? I am convinced that concealing the truth from the world community about the challenges that threaten it is an international crime.

Current crisis caused by the pandemic demonstrated the unreadiness of nations at the global and sovereign state levels to meet such challenges. It demonstrated weakness of institutions global governance - WHO, UN - to prevent the spread of epidemics at an early stage, and mobilize the world community to overcome the consequences.

COVID-19 showed the loss of trust between leading countries and resulting reluctance of global cooperation. I fully support the continuous appeal of the UN Secretary General in all his statements to restore confidence in international relations as a fundamental basis to turn the world in pieces into a world of peace. COVID-19 can destroy us all living in conflict, or vice versa - regain confidence in relations between nations in face of a common challenge.

Ongoing pandemic revealed underestimation of the role of healthcare in the system of national and global security. I agree with those who understand that making healthcare a national and global security issue means getting organized (9).

In my deep conviction, the main lesson that our civilization should learn from this crisis is understanding and accepting that Global problems need Global solutions in Global partnership in order to stimulate the necessary actions to contain any outbreak before it's too late. This is not a random motto of World Information Transfer who is hosting today's webinar SOURCES USED AND QUOTED:
1. Sergey Shevchuk. What COVID-19 pandemic will be for the USA, the European Union and Ukraine? Interview with one of the best economists in the world Yuriy Gorodnichenko. - Finance liga. net. 04/15/2020.
3. Dang Yuan. China is a coronavirus friend in need, but is it a friend indeed? - Deutsche Welle. 21.05.2020
4. Matthias von Hein. Disinformation and propaganda during the coronavirus pandemic. -Deutsche Welle. 31.03.2020
5. EEA Special report update: Short assessment of narratives and disinformation around the COVID-19 pandemic. May 20,2020
6. EUvsDisinfo. Disinformation can kill. - SSUE: 189. MARCH 26, 2020
Thank you, thank you very much. It’s nice to see you at least virtually. And I am grateful first of all to Mariam for inviting me and putting us in touch to organize this event and to Hanifa Mezoui for the introduction. I am grateful to our moderator Mr. Gupta for moderating this event. And also, lovely to see Christine once again. You are all old friends from better days. Hopefully, our days will get better in the future. I will outline my vision, of what the ECOSOC could do and how it could contribute to what I call the triple crisis and you added a fourth dimension which I think is quite right with the COVID crisis, the SDG challenge, and the climate challenge as well as manifestations that have come forward in this crisis, the manifestations of inequality and racism.

ECOSOC, has a mandate which is quite broad and it’s in the Charter, a mandate to promote international economic cooperation and through the international economic cooperation to promote better lives and livelihoods and larger freedoms for all. And that mandate gives ECOSOC a wide canvas to work on. Also, ECOSOC is the coordinating body for the whole UN economic and social system and therefore has a vision that should extend to the whole of the UN family.

If ECOSOC is to address these crises, we cannot limit ourselves to making eloquent speeches or to focusing only on the processes with which ECOSOC has been so often pre-occupied: improving the working of the council, improving the High-level Political Forum, evolving the QCPR in development cooperation. I believe that we should focus on some specific issues that we need to address. And I have selected three areas for action. Firstly, it’s critical to address the financial crisis that we are facing as a result of these triple crises that beset the world.

As you know the Prime Minister of Pakistan first proposed the initiative for debt relief and we initiated a consultative process on that. Then the Secretary General launched his initiative, together with Canada and Jamaica, for financing for development and six working groups are working under that initiative and Pakistan is co-chairing with the Netherlands and the African Union their group on debt vulnerability.

There are interesting proposals that are coming forward in this discussion and these of course will be considered by the fi-

nance ministers on the 8th of September and then by the heads of state at the end of September. But what is coming through in this whole discussion on financing is the critical role that is played by the central banks of the countries which are the reserve-currency-issuing countries. These countries, the OECD countries particularly, they have issued about 10 trillion dollars in various kinds of debt and debt instruments for themselves to spend on the recovery of their economies. Specifically, 3 trillion for the U.S., 2 trillion for Japan, 2 trillion for the European Union, about 1 trillion in the U.K. These are all debt, and loan, and fiscal deficit spending that has come forward from the Central Banks of these countries. The developing countries are estimated to require at least 2.5 trillion dollars to recover from this crisis and to regain the paths towards the SDGs. In my view, the central political action that is required, is for the developing countries to engage with the central banks of the reserve-issuing-countries with the appeal to find the 2.5 trillion dollars that is necessary for their recovery. And this has to be generated in various ways. It can be generated for example through SDR creation in the IMF.

And the IMF by itself at present has a lending capacity of one trillion dollars but most of that money goes to countries which already have market access. We have to construct through the IMF and through the central banks of these major countries the ability to generate the 2.5 trillion dollars and that would be, I think, the political objective that the ECOSOC should aim to promote, and should involve our heads of states to bring that political message to the leaders of these richer countries, the reserve currency countries, to cooperate in order to generate that 2.5 trillion. It can be done, they have done it for themselves, and they can do it for the developing countries if there is political will. So that’s the first central objective that I see for ECOSOC this year in the context of financing for development.

The second area which I think we will try to focus on is the promotion of investment in sustainable infrastructure. As everybody knows, investment in sustainable infrastructure, that is infrastructure which is what is popularly called the “green economy”, is something that resonates through the entire SDGs. It will affect poverty, job creation, housing, transportation, energy etc. So all the SDG objectives can be promoted through investment in sustainable infrastructure in green energy, in renewable energy focused transportation, in green housing, in sanitation, and water, these are all key elements of economic achievements that the developing countries need to make in order to promote the SDGs.

What is the problem with regard to infrastructure investment? There is money in the market. There is about 15 trillion dollars that is sitting in the banks in the Western countries earning negative interest. That means they are losing money for keeping the money in the banks. And this money is looking for good investment opportunities. These investment opportunities exist precisely in the developing countries in infrastructure, where returns can be at least as high as 10 and 15 or 20% on investment that is made.
The major obstacle is that the developing countries do not have the capacity and the expertise to develop projects which are bankable, projects which the banks in the richer countries are able to see that these are investable and feasible projects that they can invest in and de-risk. Therefore, we have to create, within the umbrella of the United Nations, a mechanism which will help the developing countries to prepare investable, feasible projects that can be taken to the investors in the richer countries and also in some of the developing countries in the Gulf, in China etc. There are major investors waiting, looking for opportunities in infrastructure, and we can do that through a mechanism which will help to prepare pre-feasibility strike studies for the projects, ability studies to the investors and get them to invest in the actual feasibility studies and to take them to the level of investment.

"I believe that we should focus on some specific issues that we need to address. And I have selected three areas for action.

Firstly, it's critical to address the financial crisis that we are facing as a result of these triple crises that beset the world. The second area which I think we will try to focus on is the promotion of investment in sustainable infrastructure. The third area which I think is critical for the SDGs is the area of science and technology."

To accompany this project preparation mechanism, we also need to build a database, a database which would include the investors, the projects which are feasible, and the companies and corporations across the world, including the developing countries, which are capable of executing those projects. If we can bring all of that together into one think tank mechanism, we will be able to accelerate the preparation, investment and execution of projects in the developing countries. There are plenty of opportunities, the question is how to develop it and how to execute it. And that is the second area in which I hope to cooperate. I am consulting with some of the UN agencies which may have the capacity to actually operate such a mechanism. I am also in consultation with some private sectors. I was in the private sector for 10 years and raising money precisely for project investment. Therefore, I believe that if we can bring into the mix investors, like the BlackRock and others, we would be able to have a mechanism that could accelerate investment in sustainable infrastructure in the developing countries. A lot of work is happening, we have to bring it all together under the rubric of ECOSOC.

The third area which I think is critical for the SDGs is the area of science and technology. I believe that the advances that have happened in science and technology are critical to the achievement of the SDGs and that we need to focus on exactly what has to happen in order to enable developing countries to utilize all the latest technologies that are available for progress across the SDG world. I believe at least three things we can do in the science and technology field. First of all, we need to make the intellectual property regime compatible with the SDGs.

As you know that in certain cases, for example in the case of the AIDS epidemic, we made an exception to the IP regime in the WTO and allowed the production of the AIDS treatment, vaccines and treatment without the application of the IP restraints. I believe that a similar actions needs to be taken today with regard to the COVID-19 vaccine which should be available to everyone, everywhere equitably with regard to whether they are in developed or developing countries, whether they are rich or poor. So, this is a second example, but we need to go across the board and to see what are the development objectives that should call for the exceptions to the IP regime's constraints.

And I believe that if we go through the SDGs, we can map what are those essential goals where the IP regime must be made more flexible in order to enable developing countries to utilize those technologies in an affordable way and apply them for development. The second element of this exercise, in my view, would be to focus on what are the objectives for research and development in science and technology. We have seen in this COVID crisis that when we needed this vaccine the money required to invest in the research for the vaccine was unlimited. Billions of dollars have been deployed in order to develop this vaccine at an accelerated pace. So within a year we have multiple possibilities of a vaccine that have been developed because it was a compulsion, it was a requirement for the world and therefore the money was found in order to deploy for the development of this vaccine.

In a similar way we need to go through the whole SDG agenda and see what are the objectives that are critical for the developing countries in terms of scientific research and technology as such. And once we are able to identify that, then we need to convince all the research and development capabilities across the world, both in developed and developing countries. And there are considerable capabilities in academia, in scientific institutions, in corporations, but today those research and development facilities, even in academia, are connected only through the corporations. It is the corporations, it is the profit motive which directs research and development. It is not the development objectives, it is not the human objectives, which are directing research and development in these institutions and we need to change that and we need to identify objectives which serve the SDGs, which serve human development, rather than corporate profits.

So that is the second area in which we need to work on science and technology. And third and perhaps the most urgent is the question of bridging the digital divide. I think that without the digitalization of the economies of the developing countries, we will find it very difficult to adapt to the new and modern methods of investment, of business, of trade etc. The Secretary General has spelled out a road map for bridging the digital di-
vide, it’s a good road map and the ECOSOC should see how it can help and bring in the countries and the companies and the corporations and the civil society which needs to be brought into the mix in order to bridge this digital divide in the world. So, it is an ambitious agenda. And obviously we will not be able to achieve it in one day.

But we need to initiate the work in specific directions, specific directions that are promoting the SDGs, avoiding climate change and addressing the COVID crisis. I hope that this can be promoted not only with the participation of member states but it will require the participation of the private sector, it will require the participation of civil society and of individuals who are dedicated and committed to achieving the goals that we have spelled out, the COVID crisis, the SDGs, the climate change objectives, as well as promoting the central goal of equality in the world. I think the Secretary General was very eloquent when he spoke recently at the Nelson Mandela lecture when he stated that inequality is the hallmark of our era and this inequality has been made so visible by this COVID crisis, the inequality between the impacts on the poor and the impacts on the rich, the inequality in the money that is being deployed in the richer countries and the lack of money in the poorer countries. These manifestations of inequality need to be addressed and we can only do it through an exercise of solidarity, solidarity between the rich and poor countries, solidarity between the peoples of the world and civil society, as well as solidarity with the business world, which has a large debt to pay to peoples of the developing countries.

So, thank you very much and I look forward to your questions and comments.

I think to break that vicious cycle, you need to first assist the developing countries to build the governance standards that are required to build the capacities, but they can only turn to governance when they are not in a survival mode. Most developing countries are living in a survival mode, especially now with this COVID crisis. The economies of developing countries have contracted by up to 25%, and a hundred million people are being pushed back into poverty. All the achievements of the last one decade are being reversed by this crisis.

So if a leadership in a developing country is preoccupied with survival, and from this preoccupation with survival come socio-political impacts, there is disruption in society, when there is not enough to go around people begin to feed on each other. And then you have situations where societies break apart in internal conflicts, and this is happening all across, if you see the Middle East, North Africa, etc., we have that problem.

When a developing country is able to formulate a good development project, whether by itself or with the assistance of a multinational corporation or of another government, those projects usually are able to get the investment necessary. So, we need to find ways to help developing countries which do not have that capacity, or which do not have sufficient capacity, to develop viable infrastructure projects. And my proposal and my thought is to create that mechanism under the umbrella of the United Nations. The World Bank is working on it, UNDP has certain programs, the private sector has certain programs, the GIDS program, but we need to bring it all together. And for example, if a small African country has a plan to put up a new sustainable energy project it can come to this mechanism under the umbrella of the UN and allow that mechanism to either prepare the feasibility study or to ask another developing country or developed country to help to prepare that feasibility or pre-feasibility study. Then that pre-feasibility study can be taken to an investor, for example an investor like Blackstone or Black Rock or investment institutions in the Middle East like the Abu Dhabi Investment Authority or the Qatar Investment Authority or the Kuwait Investment Authority. All of them invest in infrastructure. All of them are looking for good investment project.

I think last year under the leadership of my colleague Ambassador Mona Juul of Norway, the ECOSOC did some important things. I believe that the most important thing that happened during the last session was the establishment of the Panel on Illicit Financial Flows. This was a panel that was established by the ECOSOC president jointly with the president of the General Assembly. It’s called the FACTI Panel and this is going to study all the illicit financial flows that are happening in the world, especially from developing to the develop countries.

It is estimated that one trillion dollars in criminal proceeds are transferred every year, sorry, from the developing countries to safe havens across the world. And that is a major issue that needs to be addressed. That is also financing other illicit corruption, terrorism, and other illicit financial flows that are taking place. This panel is going to address them and there is a proposal that the UN should create a central body which can coordinate the activities with regard to illicit financial flows. So that’s one important thing that happened last year.

“We need to initiate the work in specific directions, specific directions that are promoting the SDGs, avoiding climate change and addressing the COVID crisis.

I hope that this can be promoted not only with the participation of member states but it will require the participation of the private sector.”

The second, I think, was a very important discussion which was created over at the High-level Political Forum. It was in the aftermath of the COVID crisis. There was some important suggestions with regard to dealing with the COVID crisis, I think that was an important aspect. And the third thing I think, which ECOSOC established last year, was this tradition of joint initiatives between the Economic and Social Council and the General Assembly. There were several events that were held jointly, and I think that that is an important tradition that
has been established which I would hope to follow. So those are three good things, corrections there are many! able and how do we recycle them? So far there’s absolutely no way of doing it.

I think we all realize that we are living in challenging times, and not only because of COVID, but because the powers that be are stepping away from the principles of the UN Charter, which are the fundamental basis on which our world order has existed for the past 75 years. The principles of non-use of force, principles of non-interference, of non-unilateralism, of promoting solutions through international cooperation rather than unilateral efforts. So, I think we are facing a difficult world and together with this COVID crisis and the climate challenge that we have, these are obviously challenging times for us. The central role of civil society therefore, I think, is to proclaim the fundamental importance of respect for the UN Charter and its principles.

I think if civil society were to demand that the governments of the world, the governments who they represent from their countries to respect the principles of the UN Charter instead of narrow national interests, that could be a powerful message that civil society could promote across the world. We may have a chance to keep the world order for another 75 years at least.

So thank you very much and I look forward to your questions and comments.

The novel coronavirus known as SARS CoV-2 is a new virus, and Covid-19 is a new disease. My sources are The New York Times, the New England Journal of Medicine, Science and Nature. I’ll be updating everybody on the literature related to this virus.

Viruses are different from bacteria: bacteria have a cell wall and antibiotics block the cell wall from reproducing killing the bacteria. Antibiotics don’t work on viruses because they don’t have a cell wall; our treatments for viruses are to disrupt their life cycle pathways with antivirals. We have to have our body’s immune defenses to defeat them. Treatment for viral illnesses is generally supportive. We have developed some new antivirals for the treatment of HIV, and some of those may be used for this novel Corona virus.

The corona virus family has many viruses (about 250) and most have been the cause of the common cold. The first patient was actually ill on December 1 and was hospitalized at a city called Wuhan, China, on December 16. Wuhan is a large city in eastern central China with 11 million people. There are direct airline flights from Wuhan throughout the world, including about 40 of them to the United States.

The first doctor in Wuhan (Li Wenliang MD, an ophthalmologist) to treat some of these patients who were admitted to the hospital noted they had high fever, cough, shortness of breath, and many developed pneumonia. Pneumonia was bilateral and severe. On December 30, he posted on his social media page, calling this a SARS: severe acute respiratory syndrome. This was noted by the Chinese authorities; he was called into the police station. They made him sign a statement calling this illegal behavior for sharing information on this new virus.

Unfortunately, Dr. Wenliang developed this infection himself. It was called Wuhan pneumonia on December 31 and the officials in Wuhan said that this was preventable and controllable. In the next few days they had more cases, and they were characterized by fevers. Most cases were coming from the Wuhan open seafood wholesale market, a wet market in the center of Wuhan. On January 1, 2020, this food market was shut down and disinfected. Also on January 1, the World Health Organization office in Beijing was alerted according to the International Health Regulations.

There were six or seven cases immediately and swabs were taken from the back of their throat, and in several cases lung tissue was obtained. There is a famous Wuhan Institute of Virology 20 miles away from the food market. The Institute of Virology sent samples to the Shanghai Public Health Clinical Center that sequenced the entire genome from these samples by January 5. The Director Zhang Yongzhen, released this sequenced genome online for everybody in the world at considerable personal risk. But during this time in early January 7, there were members of a single family known to be affected suggesting that there was human to human spread. Wuhan had a huge potluck dinner celebration this first week in January and 40,000 families attended; this would be an ideal place to spread the virus. By January 10, there were 41 cases, and one death. Zhang Yongzhen posted the entire genetic sequence on January 11, and also posted primers for a reverse transcriptase PCR polymerase chain reaction test where you can actually test for the virus. This is called a RT-PCR test, a nucleotide testing kit. By January 11, China had provided the world with the sequence, and a testing kit for the world. “We also spoke the truth,” said Zhang Yongzhen. “But nobody listened to us, and that’s really tragic.”

By January 12 there was a surge of cases in Wuhan. By January 13 cases were reported in Thailand and other countries. On January 5, 2020, I was on a plane to China and landed in Shanghai. At NYU-Shanghai, we have a January term, where I
taught 17 masters students Climate Change and Global Public Health. On the weekend January 11 and 12, we traveled throughout China with half to Beijing and the other half on a bullet train halfway to Wuhan from Shanghai to visit the Hengduan Mountains.

On January 18, Beijing authorities were very worried and called Zhong Nanshan, an 84 year-old SARS expert, to go to Wuhan to find out what was happening. And by January 20, he reported that there was a novel Coronavirus. It would be spread by a human-to-human contact. He alerted Xi Jinping, the leader of China, who took action on January 20 closing down Wuhan.

On January 23, Wuhan was completely shut down. They built a 1000 bed hospital in 10 days, and the 56 million people in Hubei were quarantined. China was entering its Lunar New Year, and hundreds of millions of people would be traveling. This was shut down on January 30. The entire country of China was shut down.

I noted chest CT scans on BBC being broadcast in China where the Wuhan pneumonia looked bilateral and very inflammatory. Many cases had progressed to require intensive care and oxygen. I saw no mention of Wuhan pneumonia in my visit to the Hengduan Mountains halfway to Wuhan from Shanghai. I traveled by bullet train whisking away at 300 km/hr above villages and through tunnels penetrating mountains. China, I was told, had built 32,000 km of bullet trains (compared to none in the United States). I was able to fly from Shanghai to Newark on January 18. Upon arriving there was no temperature or medical or questionnaire or public health authorities at the Newark Airport. We were seemingly unaware of this epidemic in the United States.

On January 23, WHO had a meeting to determine if this was an epidemic of public health concern. The experts of WHO thought it was too soon to declare this a public health emergency. Upon obtaining Chinese information of human-to-human spread a week later, they declared it a public health emergency of international concern on January 30. On the same time 250,000 test kits were made available to 159 laboratories around the world by WHO. The Centers for Disease Control in the United States declined to accept these WHO test kits because they had their own. They had developed three targets instead of just one so it was a more advanced test. They sent it out to State public health laboratories, but the kit did not work because one of those three was contaminated.

The United States was left without any kits for the month of January. On January 31, the President of the United States barred entry from China. American travelers coming from China had to quarantine, and United and Delta suspended their flights. Alex Azar, the Health and Human Services Secretary, declared COVID-19 a public health emergency. He said the current risk was low for the United States. In 2018 we had eight and a half million travelers coming back and forth from China; thus, this was an illness that could be easily spread. Dr Michael Osterholm, Director of the University of Minnesota Center for Infectious Disease Research and Policy said that, “The cows are already out of the barn and we are talking about shutting the door.” He felt that the virus was already in the United States in February.

The first U.S. case was diagnosed in January 19 in Washington State. In February, there were three patients hospitalized in the State of Washington at same place as the first case, who was a traveler from Wuhan. Three patients were hospitalized from a nursing home; another patient had no contact to a nursing home and perished. The CDC made an investigation on February 29. Dr. Nancy Messonnier, Director of CDC’s National Center for Immunization and Respiratory Disease, said that the country will need to prepare for this virus to become widespread in the U.S. She was side-lined by the Trump Administration. The President of the United States did not want anybody to get worried and act accordingly. Therefore, the CDC was sidelined for the whole month of February instead of preparing for this pandemic.

There was a H1N1 influenza epidemic in 2009 under President Obama, and he set up a national pandemic Response Program in the National Security Council. Last summer, John Bolton who was the director of the National Security Council, abolished the national pandemic response program so the United States had no pandemic response experts.

At the time of the presentation in June 2020 there were 6.6 million cases of coronavirus across the globe with 388,000 deaths. In the United States we had 1.8 million cases and were registering 20,000 cases every single day. From then until January 29, 2021, we had been registering almost 200,000 cases per day and had seen over 25,755,100 cases with over 431,900 deaths. We developed hotspots like Utah, Florida, Mississippi, Alabama, Texas, and California with the whole country surging so we have not flattened the curve. What caused the pandemic to worsen over 6 months?

The New York Times called the radical right illiberal populous countries having the worst of the pandemics, i.e., the United States, Russia, United Kingdom, and Brazil. Those are the hotspots in the world. What were the steps taken by the right-wing populist governments that worsened the pandemic crisis?

This SARS CoV-2 virus is twice as big as the influenza virus. It’s one 1,000th of a human hair in size, and if you imagine one person standing on the planet Earth, that one person would be the size of the RNA virus. We learned about coronavirus viruses from the SARS CoV-1 and MERS (Middle East Respiratory Syndrome). There are four corona viruses that cause the common cold, and one-third of the common colds are caused by these four Corona viruses. We get the common cold every single year. If you have antibodies against these viruses, they don’t seem to work very well against different strains. The SARS virus or (Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome) occurred in 2002-2003. This was the first coronavirus that became epi-
demic; 8000 people were infected primarily in China, Hong Kong, Singapore and Southeast Asia. There were 800 deaths (10% mortality). There were no treatments, and it was quarantined into oblivion. The mortality of the COVID-19 is 1%, but the mortality of influenza is only 0.1%. The novel coronavirus is 10 times as lethal as the common flu. That's something to be concerned about. Following the SARS 2002-2003 epidemic, there was MERS in 2012. There were 850 cases in 20 countries, and that was much more fatal with a 40% mortality rate. Both the SARS and the MERS viruses came from bats according to genomic sequencing and comparison. Both had intermediate hosts: for the SARS virus it was an Asian Palm Civet, and for the MERS virus, it was the dromedary camel (one hump).

SARS CoV-2 is a novel coronavirus with 70% identity to the SARS CoV-1 virus from 2002. However, it has 96% identity to a coronavirus that lives in the horseshoe bat. There are numerous Corona viruses that live in bats and bats seem to adapt to these. There may be an intermediate carrier in pangolins since the coronaviruses infected these animals have sequence similarity to the receptor binding domain of SARS CoV-2, yet for COVID-19. The sequence information clearly show this as a novel coronavirus and could not be man-made by the Institute of Virology in Wuhan contrary to statements from Secretary of State Mike Pompeo which disseminates egregious misinformation.

There are 29,811 nucleotides in the virus (about 30,000 bases in length) making it a large RNA virus. There are 29 proteins in this virus, and these can be studied by their crystalline structure using cryo-electron microscopy. The most important protein is called the spike protein since this is the surface protein which can attach to human cells. You may have seen beautiful photographs of the corona virus which is like a little circle with all these crowns covering the surface of the virus and all those crowns are always colored red. The spike protein has on its end a receptor binding protein (RBD). It is very similar to the SARS CoV-1 virus from 2002, except it has a couple minor changes. RBD binds to human cells on a receptor called ACE2 (angiotensin converting enzyme). The spike protein binds to ACE2. ACE2 is found on many cells in the body including cardiac myocytes, neurons, and especially respiratory epithelial cells. The coronavirus can bind in the nose and the throat, and to the respiratory tract which is the main place of illness. The SARS CoV-2 virus with these changes is much better at binding ACE2 than the SARS CoV-1 virus. That's why this virus is able to be more contagious and spread from person-to-person. Since it is a respiratory epithelial virus it is easily spread by coughing, sneezing, even talking loudly, and spending more than 15 minutes near an infected person can spread the virus to you. The spike protein is highly antigenic and would be a site to develop antibodies from a vaccine or target drugs that block its interaction with ACE2. The other thing we learned about the virus is that it's very stable. It has a protein that prevents any mutation so it's stable so that if we develop drugs or vaccines, we don't have to worry about the virus mutating. However, in a pandemic, there is pressure on the virus, and RNA viruses can mutate and produce variant strains. We now have seen this in the United Kingdom and South Africa where mutations in the spike protein can make the virus more contagious and even more lethal.

The spike protein has a site where it can be cleaved called a furin site, and furin is a common protein in human cells. When the furin is activated with the binding to the ACE2, the furin cuts off the spike, and the virus enters the cell. Human cells have a mechanism that unfortunately allows the virus to invade. Once the virus is in the cell, it attaches to ribosomes and signals the ribosomes to make viral proteins. A main viral protease cuts the proteins to their right size, and then the virus can use these proteins to make new RNA, and spread to other cells. The main viral protease is another drug target, and many investigators are looking at that. Lastly, there is another viral protein called RNA dependent RNA polymerase that makes viral RNA. RNA polymerase then is another drug target, and remdesivir attacks this polymerase.

Early on there was a biotech meeting in Boston where >50 executives attended including a Chinese scientist with cold-like symptoms from Wuhan, China. They had a dinner and cocktail hour and then went home all over the world. More than half of them developed COVID-19, and epidemiological tracing suggested that this individual spread the virus to over 279,000 people, especially in the U.S. This was a respiratory exposure. It's expelled from sneezing, coughing, and singing. A choir was another hotspot; meatpacking plants where people work closely together were hotspots; immigration and detention and prisons were hotspots. It's particularly hazardous on cruise ships: Diamond Princess had many cases in Japan. Another ship with 217 passengers had 128 positive cases, but surprisingly 124 were asymptomatic. This became an important teaching point that more than half of the cases may be asymptomatic. Another finding was that 40% of U.S. deaths were occurring in nursing homes. The elderly had many comorbidities, and nursing home workers could spread the infection while caring for the many residents. We also learned that certain groups were highly susceptible, particularly African Americans and Latinos, who were three times more likely to be infected because of living in close quarters and apartment buildings. The Navajo were particularly susceptible because they crowded into small living spaces.

Most of the cases are mild, 80% and from 35 to 55% are asymptomatic. 16% are hospitalized, 4% in the ICU. Personal protective equipment is required for health care workers including gowns, gloves, N95 respirators, face shields, hats. The N95 mask protects against 1 micron particles, but it's difficult to wear. It's only recommended for healthcare workers, but a mask prevents you from exposing others and also protects you from infected droplets and fine aerosols.

In New York, there are signs everywhere to wear your mask, “It's New York tough.” If you cough or sneeze, cover
your mouth. Wash your hands with soap for 20 seconds. Every time you go out, when you come back wash your hands with soap. Be sure to maintain six feet of distancing, and avoid being around anybody for more than 10 or 15 minutes. The local health departments need to institute contact tracing and isolation of close contacts. The test for the viruses is a RT PCR, especially for healthcare workers, teachers, essential workers, etc. every two weeks using a nasal swab or saliva sample. In the U.S., we did 12 million tests or about 3% of the population by June. Fever is an important symptom and fever checks are now being made to the entrance of many buildings. Cough is another symptom, and shortness of breath is the most worrisome one because that means the virus is infecting your lungs. You can imagine your whole lungs being just a massive rubble of all the cells being killed and once that happens you can’t get oxygen into your blood. A pulse oximeter on your finger showing <95% saturation of oxygen dropping <70 or 60 means you’re developing covid pneumonia. The viral pneumonia is treated with oxygen in either a facemask, or a mechanical ventilator. If you become intubated, you’re basically anesthetized so you don’t fight the ventilator. It may take weeks for your lungs to heal. We found that taking a patient and putting them on their stomach called the prone position actually improves oxygenation. Treatment with remdesivir shortens hospitalization stay, and the potent steroid, dexamethasone, was found to reduce mortality by 20%. Convalescent plasma from somebody who’s already been infected may introduce antibodies that may help. Monoclonal antibody treatment against the spike protein has been useful, especially given early in the course of treatment. There’s an instrument called ECMO (extracorporeal membrane oxygenator) for patients on a ventilator and still not responding well. They are placed on this machine that oxygenates the blood like a heart, lung blood machine where your blood is oxygenated outside of your body. Some patients have survived with ECMO, and at least two patients have been reported to require double lung transplants to cure their affected lungs. Antibody testing for the COVID or coronavirus antibodies can tell if someone has been previously infected. In May 2020 there were 3000 New Yorkers who were randomly tested and 15% had antibodies. COVID-19 patients have a systemic disease, their kidneys may fail. The liver is infected and you may have liver enzymes elevated. There’s cognitive impairment as the brain gets infected. You’ve heard about the red skin from COVID-19, and you’ve heard that people go on anticoagulants because they get micro-emboli in their lungs’ peripheral vasculature. Some patients have heart failure because it affects the heart muscles. You’ve heard that one of the tests to see if you have coronavirus is that you can’t smell. The SARS CoV-1 uses neuropilin as a co-receptor in the nose and affects the sense of smell. Many patients have diarrhea as the GI tract is affected. Pediatricians see a multi-system inflammatory syndrome in coronavirus infected children. This is probably related to what’s called a cytokine storm. Our cells produce inflammatory mediators called cytokines, and if you produce tons of this your body goes into shock. These are called interleukins: Interleukin 1 and 6 are two of the more potent ones. Some of the experimental treatments for coronavirus include monoclonal antibodies that block these cytokines. There’s one called tocilizumab, which is anti-IL6 receptor that’s being tested.

How do you combat coronavirus? It is case finding, contact testing, tracing, and isolate. How many times have you heard Nancy Pelosi says test, trace and isolate? That’s how you control it. There’s a great article in The New Yorker about Iceland and how they did test, tracing, isolating and basically eliminated the coronavirus from Iceland. In China, they have smartphones to test tracing and isolate. If you have green on your smartphone, you’re able to go into the subway. If you have yellow, you are stopped and you can’t get on. If you’re red, you’re in quarantine and told to go home. Now New York University requires you to take your temperature in the morning and fill out your smartphone as to whether you have any symptoms just to get into any buildings.

Marginalized groups are particularly at risk. The coronavirus pandemic is occurring in the midst of systemic racism with police violence witnessed by the murder of George Floyd in the United States. John Muir, our great environmentalist, said that when we try to pick out anything by itself, we find that it is attached to everything else in the universe. This is sort of like coronavirus and race, you find that everything is attached to everything else; African Americans live in areas where there is more pollution. They have poor food choices. They suffer more obesity and develop diabetes. They have hypertension. They have less opportunity to receive health care. All of those increase their risks or developing COVID-19. We’ve recently seen that these are areas with higher particulate matter from air pollution increases the risk of developing COVID-19. For each microgram of air pollution, you have an 8% increase in risk of death from COVID-19. Black Americans and Latinos live in areas with higher particulate pollution from industrial plants and highways in their neighborhoods.

Treatments. The anti-malarial, hydroxychloroquine, was touted by President Trump who decided to self-administer this with his doctor despite a lack of any evidence that this will provide a benefit. Physicians like myself and Dr. Fauci have recommended that patients not take hydroxychloroquine until randomized clinical trials showed whether there’s any benefit, and that it would be safe. There have been numerous clinical trials showing that hydroxychloroquine has no effect on coronavirus and that it may cause heart arrhythmias in some individuals. Further azithromycin has also shown no effect. Lastly, President Trump mentioned that bleach could kill the coronavirus and suggested that ingested or inhaled bleach might be a therapy which was roundly objected to by the medical community.

Vaccines. We’re hoping that a vaccine will be developed here, and then we can get a shot and become protected against
COVID-19. There are >100 candidates being studied for a vaccine. There are five funded by the U.S. by what’s called BARDA (biological advanced research and development authority) and our warp speed program. Moderna is working with the NIH (National Institutes of Health), and they are making a messenger RNA for the spike protein. Once this is injected, the body’s cells will translate this into spike protein which will be recognized as foreign by the body’s immune cells and antibodies and cellular immunity will be induced. Second is BioNTech and Pfizer who developed a mRNA vaccine in Germany and found it had 95% efficacy in phase 3 clinical trials. Moderna also found 95% efficacy and both of these require two doses and extreme cold with Pfizer requiring minus 70 C. The extreme cold is to prevent the mRNA from degrading. Third is Oxford working on SARS and already had developed a spike protein so they were able to make a COVID-19 spike protein and put it into attenuated adenovirus. They put it in six monkeys and have prevented pneumonia. They are linked with Astra Zeneca and phase 3 clinical trials showed high efficacy also. Johnson & Johnson and Janssen have produced a vaccine with their adenovirus 26 that is also >80% efficacious and requires only one dose. Novavax has used spike proteins with an adjuvant and has also shown high efficacy. By January 2021 the Pfizer and Moderna vaccines have been approved by the FDA and 20 million Americans have been vaccinated with over 3 million receiving their second dose. It should be mentioned that mRNA vaccines are novel and represent extraordinary effort in basic science to show that they work and incredible work by pharmaceutical companies to initiate and complete phase 1/2 and phase 3 clinical trials in such a short time period.

President Trump downplayed the threat of the coronavirus. He said that there were only three cases and that it was totally under control and would go away in a short period of time. Although he closed off flights from China by the end of January, he dithered during February when we needed testing kits and Personal Protective Equipment. Although the country was closed down by March 15 by Governor’s state orders, there was no federal plan or guidance. Moreover, President Trump made wearing masks a political statement such that his followers rarely wore masks. He also pushed for the State economies to re-open, especially bars and restaurants. This led to no flattening of the curve and an explosive increase from 20,000/day to over 200,000/day. He led political rallies that became super spreader events. He staged meetings and Rose Garden events at the White House that became super spreader events. Finally, he became infected himself, and his wife Melania and his son Baron. On March 15, the United States was closed down everywhere. Columbia came out with a study showing that if we closed down one week earlier, we would have saved 36,000 lives, and if we closed down two weeks earlier, we would have saved 54,000 lives. Historians will shoulder that responsibility on President Donald J. Trump.

It is a pleasure to be here and it is a privilege to be a member of the WIT Board. I have enjoyed and met for a long time so many wonderful folk. COVID-19 is a really complex and far reaching and unchartered pandemic. It literally impacts all of mankind. As you look at any map, you can see that there is no place that is not impacted. What I’d like to talk about today is to follow up a little bit on the other presentations. Dr. Rom explained the pulmonary issues around the disease and Dr. Goldstein on the policy and global implications from World leadership. I’d like to drill down a little bit further and talk about what this COVID-19 does to our food supply, and how the COVID-19 process has impacted the things that we would think about fairly obvious ones and some that are a little harder to think about. Think about this, in three months’ time we have gone from knowing little about this virus to learning about its extraordinary effects. This morning I logged on to the John Hopkins website right before we went on for the webinar, and there are over 9 million cases with 468,900 deaths. This is really rather exceptional.
Now all of us are joining the webinar today, online, we are telecommuting I work at Rutgers University, but I am teaching all of my classes online. But when you think about the people involved in the food system, they are not telecommuting, they are not folks that are online, they are folks that are literally in the field. And they are producing a crop. It is highly perishable. It cannot wait until you log online you cannot go back and look at the video.

The food system is much more complicated. The chief economist for the World Food Program at the United Nations reminded us that the corona virus pandemic was about to set off the next global hunger crisis, and he predicts that there will be an additional 130 million more people who are in what we call in severe hunger. There are lots of hungry people and remember too that the folks that are in severe hunger are also the folks that are usually very poor and the virus has disproportionately affected the poor in our world, and made their life, even more challenging.

Keep in mind as you look at the folks that are affected by this virus. They are folks who have lots of other comorbidities: a vitamin D deficiency, diabetes, poor nutrition to begin with, hypertension. And so those folks are primarily more at risk to the COVID-19 problem than a normal healthy person, then you add on the fact when we look at global food issues that just in the last year or so we have become aware of the locust issues in East Africa and some of this has been the worst locust infestations in 75 years. So already food was in short supply. And in several parts of the world there are cyclones and other serious weather events.

About half of the 8 billion people in the world live on about 5.5 dollars or less per day. 10% about 800 million of those folks live on less than $2 a day so again we have folks that were really on the edge, as far as food availability and this just made it much worse. Sadly, although the world does grow enough food, it is the distribution that is the challenge. In earlier reports when we would talk about food insecurity and people at risk, the main reasons that people suffered food insecurity was conflict, followed by the weather. Now, in 2020, the number one spot is COVID-19.

One of the other challenges that we have is where is the agriculture. If we look at the screen or the data that comes from our world data set, you can see that a large number of people who are involved in the production of food, are in the areas that are most at risk for COVID and for food insecurity. The other thing we have to remember is that when we have locked down, and we have agricultural workers and workers involved in the food supply chain, they get immediately affected. 94% of the global workforce according to the ILO are in countries where the workplaces are closed. And the ILO estimates that a three-month shutdown we have had thus far is the equivalent of a loss of 305 million full time jobs. Folks are not able to go to work, because their workplaces are not functioning. There is no income, there is no food supply since many of those places are in fact food production programs either as a farmer or food process. Keep in mind, too, that in many of these countries when it’s in a lockdown a lot of the children who are already food insecure received their food, their meals from the schools that they attend, and the schools are not open.

Now let us look at where people already are hungry. This is a hunger map from 2019. That was drawn, way before we even thought about COVID-19. And again you can see the places that concentrated where people were working in agriculture are also the places that are the places that are most hungry. And we also see we have almost a billion people who are hungry.

The irony is, as I mentioned in other WIT presentations when I first started to teach these kinds of topics. We always talked about the 800 to 900 million people who were undernourished and did not have adequate calories. In the last five years, we have also added a new statistic, about the 1.4 billion people who have too many calories. That percent of global population are in fact obese, but today we are going to concentrate on those folks who do not have adequate calories. The International Monetary Fund says that this number of hungry people is going to rise, and it is probably going to have the worst global recession since the Great Depression.

United Nations, in fact, is suggesting that we are probably going to have a doubling of the number of people who are acutely hungry. Here are a couple of examples. Zimbabwe is a medium-sized country, just under 15 million population. Zimbabwe has suffered tremendously from climate crisis and incredible economic instability. The pandemic has just made the hunger problems so much worse. If we look at the numbers that the Zimbabwean government published in December of 2019, they state that about 3.6 million people were acutely hungry, and that it has more than doubled as of March 2020. The fact that the unemployment rate at the end of last year in

![Global food price spikes reversed progress on eradicating world hunger](image-url)
Zimbabwe was about 11 percent and in May 2020 it is already up to 90 percent. Most of this is due to COVID-19.

Let us look long term, even prior to COVID-19 at the FAO, the United Nations food program, notice in the second graph in the lower half of the slide, that they predict an increase and not an insignificant increase, especially if you look in the last five years from 15 to 20, of the number of people who are going to be undernourished. This is a compilation of data from the USDA. I just wanted to show you that it is not a simple thing. For one crop, eggs have become three times more expensive just in a two-month period. A lot of that is because eggs are simple protein, and what is the easiest way to have a low-calorie, high protein healthy meal. You make eggs, so of course, eggs have gone up in this graph about three times, and a lot of meat has gone up in cost, also.

Now let us look at one that is really striking. And this is a place that I have worked very long and hard for over 30 years now it is the kingdom of Thailand. And as you can see here in the kingdom of Thailand, in the first quarter of 2020, the dramatic increase in the price of rice. Thailand was the world’s largest exporter of rice now it is Vietnam, but Thailand is still up in the top two or three countries that export. Clearly China and India grow more rice because they have much larger populations. But the Thai and Vietnamese farmers rely on rice exportation as a way to improve their income. Look at their dramatic increase in price, realize, of course, that half of the world’s 8 billion people get more than 20% of their daily caloric intake from rice, so of their daily caloric intake and their protein from rice for about 250 million people that are, specifically in Asia. It is more than half their calories. When the price has this giant surge, as you can see here in this graph, It Immediately impacts the availability of folks to get food, and to maintain their health and to stay well.

In the northern parts of Thailand where it’s quite rural and very heavily agricultural the case numbers have been low. The number of reported deaths is currently low, but people resist moving their crop into the large urban areas where both the number of cases and resulting deaths have been quite high. There is a hesitancy on the part of producers to move the product because they know they are going to be at risk.

One of the challenges for small farmers, is that they do not have access to a market to distribute what they grow. These beautiful women in the photo are in the middle of need share. The share of the largest proportion of people involved in agriculture are women farmers. One of the things that they told me is that their biggest challenge was the supply chain and distribution. They can grow some spectacular crops with very careful irrigation, lots of hard work grow them organically and sustainably but they need to get into the market, the onions that these women were growing in here took five days to get out into the marketplace in Ghana. In five days, onions often are not in the best of shape but they traveled in the heat and they started out with a camel cart. Eventually they made it to a small truck, then to a big truck and finally to the crowd to the market.

If I am hungry as an older person, somebody who is over 65, it might slow me down and I might not have the energy I want, I might be a little more susceptible disease, but there will not be any long-term damage, that’s already been done. But, if I’m less than five or six years old, everything about me is still growing. Children grow in development until they’re about 20 years old, and so any loss, not only in calories but also the nutrients and vitamins are essential for growth. Already, one in four children in the developing countries are stunted. They need the right food and nutrients to get to their full potential. They are not going to grow properly, physically and intellectually, they are not going to develop to be healthy and productive citizens. When you disrupt the food supply for a young person at that stage in their life, It really has long-term and far-reaching effects.

In many places, there are reports in the last month or so, as this COVID-19 impact is even more seriously felt that people are eating their seed corn. Sometimes you will hear the expres-
sion. I had explained this one time to one of my classes, when someone said folks are getting their seed corn and they all stared at me and said Dr. Robson, what are you talking about, and it is an old term it goes all the way back to biblical times that people saved corn for seed for the next year. During hungry times the seed that would be replanted for next year’s crop. If people got hungry enough, they would consume the seed corn so that expression. The current application would be that people are spending all their savings so that they do not have any savings in reserve for a difficult time. If you are a farmer, you probably do not have any savings what you have saved is seed for the next year. If you are hungry, you are going to eat your seed corn. We have looked at the pressure on the system is that they are eating the reserves they are eating their seed corn. And then, when the time is ready to plant, they will not have anything to plant because they have consumed it as food as opposed to seed. So that makes it even more challenging.

The other issue that we also sometimes forget that the poor countries rely very heavily on the United States and the Gulf countries for remittances. Remittances are where the expats, the foreign workers who, for example, in the Philippines (ten percent of Filipino workers live and work outside the Philippines) send back money to their home countries. Many workers from the African Countries, also send back money to their families back home. When we say that the countries are heavily reliant on remittances, that means the folks that left the country or work outside the country are sending money back. Under COVID that is not happening and there is no money to buy food and that exacerbates the problem.

I will end this presentation with a quote from Agnes Kalibata, Special Envoy for the 2021 Food Systems Summit organized by the UN DESA: “The pandemic has powered an unprecedented global appetite for change, from the movements to secure free school meals for disadvantaged children to agricultural reforms taking place worldwide. The urgency created by COVID-19 has demonstrated how quickly the global community can respond and adapt to existential threats, and it is this energy that must be channeled into transforming food systems to be more inclusive, more equitable and more sustainable. Even before the pandemic, 2021 was destined to be a “super-year” for food. A year when the right to safe and nutritious food, and the production, consumption and disposal of food finally received the requisite global attention as the UN convenes the world’s first Food Systems Summit. Finally, too often, we say it is time to act and make a difference, then continue as before. But it would be unforgivable if the world was allowed to forget the lessons of the pandemic in our desperation to return to normal life. The writing on the wall is clear that our food systems need reform now. Humanity is hungry for this change.”

We are having this conversation at the time when the whole world is faced not only with health crisis but human crisis that’s challenging societies at their core. I would first like to express solidarity with all countries affected by the pandemic and condolences and sympathy to the families of the victims of COVID-19, and those whose lives and livelihoods have been affected by the crisis. We are all deeply concerned by the human illness and death worldwide caused by COVID-19 pandemic. The negative impact on physical and mental health and social well-being, the negative impacts on economies and societies, has exposed and the consequent exacerbation of inequalities within and between countries.

We know that there are over 7 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 today in the world, and over 400,000 people have died worldwide. And of course, our first response needs to be to contain the pandemic, and keep health workers and first responders safe. But it is easier said than done. This pandemic has exposed the fragility of public health systems in many countries, be it because the access to medical services is not available to all, be it because of lack of hospital capacity to care for so many patients, be it because of lack of equipment or ability to test and trace the virus and provide proper quarantine.

We need to increase research and development funding for vaccines and medicines, leverage digital technologies and strengthen scientific international cooperation in response to COVID-19 to bolster coordination including with the private sector, towards rapid development, manufacturing and distribution of diagnostics, anti-viral medicines, personal protective equipment and vaccines, adhering to the objectives of efficacy, safety, equity, accessibility and affordability. We also need to underline the important role of extensive immunization against COVID-19, and to make sure it becomes a global public good for health in preventing, containing, and stopping transmission, in order to bring the pandemic to an end, once
safe quality, efficacious, effective, accessible and affordable vaccines are available.

It is extremely important and essential to uphold freedom of expression and allow unimpeached access to free flow of accurate and timely information for public health purposes without suppression, while countering misinformation online and offline with accurate, clear and evidence-based information and avoiding efforts that could result in censorship of protected speech, thus endangering human rights and the rule of law.

But the impact of the pandemic is much larger. We need to emphasize the multi-dimensional nature of the pandemic, and its severe impacts on human security which adds to the challenges faced by all countries, especially developing countries and countries in special situations, and threatens to reverse recent progress, and reinforce pre-existing obstacles, gaps and systemic challenges in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, and the achievement of the sustainable development goals.

The pandemic has unprecedented socio-economic impact with the third of the global population in the virtual lockdown, even though we are seeing nowadays that it’s opening up gradually. And the hardest hit are women and children, youth, low-wage workers, small and medium enterprises, the informal sector and vulnerable groups. But many more are impacted all over the world as many industries, such as tourism, hospitality, retail, transport, have suffered huge losses, and had either to let their employees go, or furlough them.

As proposed in the report of the United Nations Secretary-General on socio-economic impact of COVID-19, large scale coordinated and comprehensive multi-lateral response, amounting to at least 10% of the global GDP is needed now more than ever. It is a global pandemic, and it is important to ensure that the developing countries have the best chance of managing this crisis, or COVID-19 will risk becoming a long-lasting brake on economic recovery, as World Bank has forecasted that the pandemic and shutdown of advanced economies could push as many as 60 million people into extreme poverty, erasing much of the recent progress made in poverty alleviation.

But it is also extremely important to build back better. And the only way is to continue achieving sustainable development goals. If we had further advanced in meeting the goals, we would have been better prepared to face this challenge with stronger health systems, fewer people living in extreme poverty, less 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 for sustainable development and the sustainable development goals. We must also foster green structural transformation of the world economy. Simply reviving the existing carbon heavy economy will only exacerbate irreversible climate change, biodiversity loss and other environmental risks.

Currently, according to the Nature Journal, global carbon emissions have fallen by more than 8%, and it is projected that the cumulative global emissions for 2020 could drop anything from 4-7% which would represent the largest drop since the 2nd World War. According to the same source, the largest reductions were in absolute numbers in the electric power and ground transport sectors, followed by aviation industry. In fact, the scale of the reduction in emissions, this year could be similar to the annual emissions reductions that could be required in order to meet the objectives of the 2015 Paris Climate Agreement. But the big question is whether governments will advance a low-carbon energy agenda as they seek to stimulate the economy. This will require long-term commitments, five to ten years, of public spending and pricing reforms and different approaches for major economies such as G20 as well as middle and low-income economies.

Major economies will need to get public spending to support private sector green innovation and infrastructure, development of smart grids, transport systems, charging station networks and sustainable cities. Pricing carbon and pollution and removing fossil fuel subsidies can accelerate the transition, raise the revenues for the necessary public investments and lower the overall cost of the green transition adopting a climate sensitive approach including directing investment into building sustainable and inclusive economies, and strengthening approaches that enhance both resilience and efficiency such as promoting climate action and a circular economy and raising the ambition of nationally determined contributions, need also to be part of the COVID-19 recovery efforts.

While middle- and low-income economies will need to find suitable ways to alleviate poverty, which is increasingly rural, and reducing land-use change. Promising strategies include reallocating irrigation subsidies to extend basic water and sanitation services, fostering adoption of renewable energy, and improved energy efficiency technologies in rural areas, market-based incentives to reduce forests loss and degradation and allocating fossil fuel taxes to fund nature-based solutions. Current crisis has highlighted the need to reduce the risk of economic, social and environmental impacts of disasters, many of which are exacerbated by climate change, and there is a need for action at all levels to enhance efforts to build resilience through the sustainable management of ecosystems to reduce the impacts and cost of disasters. But above all, what is needed to effectively respond to global crises is global solidarity, com-
mitment to international cooperation, and multilateralism.

We all need to commit to intensify international cooperation to contain mitigate and overcome the pandemic and its consequences through multi-dimensional, coordinated, innovative, swift, and decisive response especially for the poorest and most vulnerable people and countries. We need to refocus our action and make sustainable long-term investments to end poverty and inequalities, and address the underlying human rights concerns that have left us vulnerable to the pandemic, and greatly exacerbated its effect with the view to building a more inclusive just sustainable and resilient future. This can be done only by engaging all relevant stakeholders including civil society, human rights defenders, the private sector and academia, through the establishment of participatory and transparent multi-stakeholder platforms and partnerships to design effective responses and review their implementation. So these are some of the things that I wanted to put on the table for you, and I was thinking that the best way to go forward would be to hear comments and questions from the participants, but my main message is that we need to recover better and that means that we have to recover in a more sustainable way and that the only way that we can do that is if we are going to implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development and sustainable development goals because this pandemic has shown how much inequality exists in the countries and how much inequality matter when you are faced with such a huge pandemic and also how much response matters.

We cannot afford to have another pandemic like this, and not being ready for it. So the resilience and how resilient we are matters. When I say resilient I mean resilient in all sectors, not just resilient associated with environmental disasters. But we also have to be resilient in our economies, we have to be resilient in our societies. So I will stop here and I would be very glad to hear your views and your comments, and also any questions that you might have for me. Thank you very much.

The Q&A part focused on population dynamic and it was said that the population is not actually growing as fast as it was predicted in the 90s. It is actually slowing down, but the issue is that the growth is very uneven in the world and each country would need to define policies to deal with their own population dynamic. There was also focus on interlinkages and interconnectedness of SDGs and the importance to not work in silos and to include all three dimensions of sustainable development (economic, social and environmental) in the implementation of SDGs.

We also discussed support to developing countries and the United Nations role in it through funds that the Secretary-General has established and strengthened global solidarity, but also transferring technology, especially digital technology to help developing countries. There was a discussion on protecting human rights and not using COVID as a pretext to violate human rights, including those of refugees. We also discussed the 2020 High-level political forum on sustainable development and accelerated actions that will be discussed. These accelerated actions are based on the findings from the scientists that were published in the Global Sustainable Development Report which was issued last year. They looked at different areas where they thought the accelerated action can get best results for the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and these are human well-being and capabilities which is the social part of the accelerated actions and then there is also the economic part about sustainable and just economies, food systems and nutrition patterns and of course, it’s also about the environment and living within the planetary boundaries.

Also last year the Sustainable Development Goals Summit was held in September, where Heads of State and Government agreed on a political declaration which has ten cross-cutting areas which are very similar to the ones of the Global Sustainable Development Report, but even a little bit broader looking also at different ways of financing, strengthening institutions, bolstering action at national and local levels and so on. So this was combined in this year’s HLPF programme. And then the President of ECOSOC with this new development of COVID-19 has also decided to have the HLPF look at the impact of the pandemic and what the ways are to recover better.

This means that we should not go back to our old ways and should really strive to find ways to reduce the greenhouse gas emissions and also to build the economy that is greener and carbon neutral while at the same time look at the resilience of societies and how better to protect the environment. It was underlined that everyone needs to take part in this sustainable recovery from governments and public institutions to corporate and private sector as well as civil society and all of us collectively starting from ourselves and our lifestyles including our approach to plastics and how we produce and consume.

There was discussion on long-term policies and looking at the future trajectories. It was also stressed that equality and access to opportunities is very important and the role of education has been underlined in this context as a conduit to more resilient and knowledge-based economies and societies. It was said that each country has its own unique challenges and they vary from country to country, but the most important is to get scientific information, get data and get policies based on them and also look at the impact that these policies have so if they don’t have the impact you desire make course change, try to do something better and make benefits shared by all the population of the country.
precaution. First I would make the shorter trip to Chang An, near Shenzhen and then on to Guanyao, close to Guangzhou, China. I was frightened, but I also knew Mattel had many staff traveling to the mainland on a daily basis for many years. We still didn’t have mobile phones and that would mean a communication blackout for most of my trip which was frightening.

Stopping at China immigration, my passport was examined and my photo was meticulously compared to my face numerous times. Was the officer going to hold me for questioning because I was an American I wondered as I got the nod and hand-stamped passport page allowing me to enter China. There was no danger, just lots of Chinese staring at me because I was the only Caucasian in the immigration hall and I looked different with my colorful clothes and stylish fashion accessories, compared to the local Chinese people, who all wore black and dark gray attire.

I exited immigration, entered the company car and the journey continued through the city of Chang An, with rows and rows of small stores selling mops, brooms, plastic buckets, food, or simply cutting and shampooing hair on the street in the open air. As I approached Mattel’s location, the area was noticeably run down, without any contemporary architecture. It was more rural, with huge amounts of dust and dirt everywhere. The buildings were all concrete, with mold accumulating on the outside from the high humidity. I would say that China was anything but red—it was gray! Once inside the hot non-air-conditioned factory, the noise of sewing machines was deafening, the heat from plastic molding machines was suffocating. It looked like a war zone, with Barbie body parts everywhere. The buildings were all concrete, with mold accumulating on the outside from the high humidity. I would say that China was anything but red—it was gray! Once inside the hot non-air-conditioned factory, the noise of sewing machines was deafening, the heat from plastic molding machines was suffocating. It looked like a war zone, with Barbie body parts everywhere.

Within all this organized chaos I received a warm welcome from the local Mattel China staff. They truly were happy to see me and graciously offered me refreshments. Tea in a beautiful, delicate porcelain pot, fresh fruits, and cookies were waiting on elegant serving plates. We introduced ourselves with handshakes and a slight head bowing. After tea the tour began, introducing me to how the famous Barbie dolls are made.

Hundreds of ladies were lined up at long tables with sewing machines, each creating parts of the fashions. More operators were located at other tables, inspecting and dressing dolls with lightning speed and accuracy. If you’ve ever dressed a Barbie doll, you know how difficult it is to quickly slip the clothes on her body. It brought back memories of my first day at Mattel, when I failed to properly shove Barbie’s legs into those tiny pantyhose. These skillful ladies were Olympic champs at doll dressing. I was amazed at the effort put into the small details. Never expecting the immense scale and complex engineering that went into the production of just a doll. The huge amount of workers were like bees swarming over sweet pink pollen in a fragrant garden. One advantage of manufacturing in China was that the labor force was very large and inexpensive compared to the US; therefore, mechanical automation wasn’t a priority.

Working for an American company in China was prestigious. Mattel had a good reputation, providing immaculate dormitory living for staff and three meals a day at the canteen to encourage the workers to stay after the long training process. These young Chinese bravely left their families to travel thousands of miles to earn a living and send their wages back home. I was personally touched by the Chinese diligence at work and desire to support their families. After hearing about their journeys from home and the sacrifices they were making to earn a living wage, I was brought to tears and embarrassed that I’d been an American critical of the Chinese before I’d even set foot in Asia. Being uninformed isn’t an excuse for developing the wrong perception. I’d certainly gotten sucked into the political propaganda I’d been exposed to all of my life. The realization from my first experience in China was that different is not necessarily bad—it’s only different.

I felt honored to see for myself the work ethic and the high standards that Mattel provided for the Chinese staff. Most Americans wouldn’t want to live in a dormitory without modern Western conveniences. But for these migrants, the circumstances at Mattel were better than the lives they’d had back home, combating poverty and starvation. Now they had a job and income to help their families. My expectations were high on the next visit to a prominent Chinese city in Guangzhou. This was now my “real deal,” to see if all my inhibitions about visiting “Red China” were valid.

I departed on the train and walked down the steps, or more accurately was pushed with the crowds of people trying to rush through customs. The China immigration hall was no more than a cement-covered room with metal tables that had immigration officers sitting on small metal chairs, wearing wrinkled uniforms too big for their slender physiques. They looked like little boys wearing their fathers’ old clothing. My passport was quickly stamped and no word was spoken or eye contact was exchanged. I was directed to the door that opened to the East Guangzhou Welcome Area. One stepping out the train station door, I was swamped by small, tattered-looking children, holding out their hands, begging for money, pulling on
my clothes. My escort advised me to ignore them and walk quickly to the car. My heart was broken to see this poverty and little children's sad eyes, but I was told if you give one child money they won't leave you alone. It was a begging-business, so best to be stone-faced and keep walking.

My goodness, this is what America feared as the Big Red Monster that was going to annihilate all Westerners? Once again I was ashamed that I'd believed the American propaganda about China being an evil empire. We exited the parking lot, the screaming children following us until we gained enough speed to reach the main highway.

Driving through, downtown Guangzhou looked old, ugly, and impoverished. No thought to building design. It had no Asian-style construction and the architecture was either dilapidated or just unimpressive. The buildings seemed only functional, meant to hold offices and employees, nothing more. There wasn't much vehicle traffic either, mostly pedestrians and folks on bicycles, dressed in the Chinese black and gray attire, quickly moving in every direction to reach their destinations and avoid getting hit by a bus. I felt no fear, I just felt really depressed. The people were expressionless and poor, yet they were orderly and calm as they went about their business to survive. Whether it was sweeping the sidewalks with a straw broom, selling hot tea, or giving shampoos to customers on the streets, they chose work instead of begging.

The experiences in Guangzhou certainly provided me with many lessons not listed in a guidebook to China. The example at Mattel was stunning. In the past these factory workers had been plowing fields and milking cows, and now they were learning the technical skills to make Barbie dolls and sending money to their families. I was impressed with the respect they had for Mattel as an employer. The Chinese people I met and the atmosphere of my visit were opposite to my lifelong perception. I had more fear walking down an alley in New York City than being the only American on a train traveling in China. My travels to China became routine.

Five years after I moved to Hong Kong and on July 1, 1997, Hong Kong would be handed over to the People’s Republic of China. What next? Hong Kong, this “Pearl of the Orient,” could implode and the forces of communism rule everyone’s lives. Or even worse, would the Chinese government confiscate the residents’ enormous wealth, which had been accumulated in this tiny colony under British leadership? These speculations had been the news headlines for years.

July 1, 1997, arrived like any day except for the royal handover ceremony attended by Charles, Prince of Wales. The distinguished, peaceful manner in which the British, after occupying Hong Kong for 150 years, handed this territory back to China seemed normal as having late-afternoon tea. The mystery of what would happen next was in the minds of the Hong Kong people and the world was watching. I was watching. Would Mattel still keep its office in Hong Kong? Would the Mattel factories in China still exist? The future was unknown. One thing was certain, that China wouldn’t want to lose the money-making machine of Hong Kong. China agreed that the rule of law in Hong Kong would remain for fifty years after the handover, which would take us to 2047. I decided not to focus on the “what ifs” and move in the direction of how to do my best to make my staff successful.

In 1998 it was necessary for my department to expand to support the increased product development. Due to rising costs in Hong Kong and rising level of my comfort with working in China, I started the plan for Phase 2 of Mattel Asia Design and Development. Against all my previous fears, I would have an office in mainland China at the Mattel tooling factory for plastic parts, which had an empty third level fitted with a roof, dirt floors, and concrete walls. This empty “dirt room” appealed to me, an artist’s dream of a giant marble block ready to be chiseled into a masterpiece. The building’s two lower floors were occupied by machines that produced the dolls’ parts, i.e., Barbie legs, arms, heads, torsos, shoes and various fashion accessories. The color palette of the furnishings in the dark, dusty building, other than Barbie’s many skin tones, was gray walls accented with more gray concrete floors. Some offices were “avant-garde” and contained light beige fabric on the chairs. I commented to the factory director that this location was very dull looking and depressing. The director replied, “Well this is the standard in China and you can do the same on the upper floor with your new offices. Nothing else is expected!” I humbly thought to myself, “Maybe China standards but it is not my standard.” I was no architect or interior designer, but as I’d learned in Hong Kong, aesthetic morale stimulates creativity and supports self-worth. China staff deserved a dynamic environment.

I was given free reign to redesign the existing gray-dirt 3rd floor. The result was a large, open studio with turquoise tile floors, bright multicolored upholstered chairs, purple tile bathrooms, and a lime-green colored tea pantry. I made sure the dishes for dining were color coordinated, and the wall décor was Chinese folk art that reflected the bright colors and positive energy.

Symbolic paintings of waterfalls were displayed at the entrance, to carry in good fortune. A large tank ready to be chiseled into a masterpiece. The building’s two lower floors were occupied by machines that produced the dolls’ parts, i.e., Barbie legs, arms, heads, torsos, shoes and various fashion accessories. The color palette of the furnishings in the dark, dusty building, other than Barbie’s many skin tones, was gray walls accented with more gray concrete floors. Some offices were “avant-garde” and contained light beige fabric on the chairs. I commented to the factory director that this location was very dull looking and depressing. The director replied, “Well this is the standard in China and you can do the same on the upper floor with your new offices. Nothing else is expected!” I humbly thought to myself, “Maybe China standards but it is not my standard.” I was no architect or interior designer, but as I’d learned in Hong Kong, aesthetic morale stimulates creativity and supports self-worth. China staff deserved a dynamic environment.

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visitor or staff that made the long journey to get to this remote location would enter this world of bright colors after the long, gray, dusty concrete journey and would find emotional ease and a warm welcome. The smiling faces and expressions of joy from the China staff and visitors, paved a smooth road to meet the challenges ahead and a great way to start business.

When the office was complete, the factory’s vice president told me, “Paulette, you brought first-rate class to Mattel in China.” He was so impressed that in the next year he redecorated the factory offices to coordinate with what I had colorfully designed. The standard was raised...gray and beige were finally history. Excellent work environment led to happy staff and stimulated creative energy to support design for one of the most famous girls… Barbie.

I am convinced that working for an American company in Asia allowed me the freedom to see beyond the accepted China standard of minimal comfort. I was able to humanize the physical office environment, as well as add a compassionate ethical living condition. I’m not minimizing my role to initiate change, but the staff knew that Mattel was a dependable caring employer that put people and profit as equally important. It made the difference between success/failure and humanity/slave-labor.

After nearly 19 years working in Asia, I retired in 2011 and returned to the USA. I was so proud of the accomplishments working with local Chinese staff and teaching skills that lifted them, not just from poverty, but showed them the Good Old American way to achieve goals and work with dignity. I assumed, like in the fairytales, my staff would live happily ever after employed by a creative caring company.

Since 2019, however, I feel I was fooled by the giant sleeping Dragon! Not the great Chinese people, the experience I had with them was authentic as I described. The Dragon that is dangerously awake is the Chinese Communist Party (CCP), a totally separate entity, waiting for decades to accumulate power and profit in order to kill its prey.

I’m not a politician, just a working girl from New York, that lived and been employed in Asia. I couldn’t avoid noticing the obvious. Simply stated, China reneges on a 50 year deal with Hong Kong of “One Country Two Systems,” removes democracy that led to one of the greatest financial and humanitarian success stories. Then intentionally covers up the coronavirus release in China to the public, causing a global pandemic. No political opinion is needed to see the scorching fire in this Dragon’s breath. Yes the color of the fire is RED!

The softer side of China that I saw while living in Hong Kong was a temporary situation to cover up true motivation. Collaborate with American/Western companies, focus on profit and use the Chinese people as tools to accomplish the goal. China was waiting for the big prize of the Hong Kong Handover to have an opportunity to reshape and revolutionize their global position. Even when a supposed accidental COVID-19 virus emerged locally, the CCP did not want to lose face and took this opportunity to destroy the global economy and benefit by being more powerful, wanting to become the last Dragon to walk the planet.

I visit Hong Kong every few years and see the changes transforming Hong Kong into just another Chinese city. CCP doesn’t need this financial hub any longer since the West has fed the Chinese economy for years. I was naive to not see the real intention in Hong Kong or on the Mainland. I did not see the behind the scenes motivation of the CCP. The CCP only went along with improved working conditions if there was financial gain. The people didn't matter. Looking back, the ultimate goal for the CCP was to control the population at any cost. The fear mongers predicting doom after the Hong Kong Handover were right. I was looking through Barbie-pink colored glasses and didn’t see the red flames torching freedom.

When the CCP was unapologetic for the pandemic and global devastation, I saw the detour in the road to China clearly. The world sees the truth and there’s a fast paced plan for companies to quickly move out of China. A large scale Western Retreat is happening which will most likely cause China’s economy to plunge. Eventually no western watch dogs, the business cost reductions will happen with lowering working conditions and salaries of the huge labor force. That girl from New York would not move to Hong Kong or work in China in 2021. Generations of improved working conditions and humanitarian efforts will be gone to save money and gain control over the Chinese people, they will have no options.

The Dragon is awake to conquer and I fear the red flames it breathes is destroying the prosperous humanitarian road. The Detour-Sign is up. All good things no longer lead to China. The fears of the early 1990s are coming true…the Pearl of the Orient is starting to implode. My heart breaks for my former staff and friends in China who will witness their achievements disappear when the smoke from the Dragon’s breath clears. The working and humanitarian treatment measurement-bar is now lowered and the direction for the Chinese people is heading underground, covered with the dust of lost opportunity and mind control.

Color this picture back to gray.
Since 1992, World Information Transfer, Inc. (WIT) is a non-profit, non-governmental organization in General Consultative Status with the United Nations, promoting environmental health and literacy. In 1987, inspired by the Chernobyl (Ukrainian spelling) nuclear tragedy in Ukraine, WIT was formed in recognition of the pressing need to provide accurate actionable information about our deteriorating global environment and its effect on human health. WIT exercises its mandate through:

- **World Ecology Report (WER)**. Published since 1989, the World Ecology Report is a quarterly digest of critical issues in health and environment, produced in four languages and distributed to thousands of citizens throughout the developing and developed world.

- **Health and Environment Conferences**: Since 1992, WIT has convened annual conferences, held at United Nations headquarters on the growing clinical evidence supporting the link between environmental degradation and its effect on human health. The Conferences have been co-sponsored by UN member states and its agencies.

- **Internship**: World Information Transfer (WIT) offers internships at the United Nations Headquarters in New York City. Our goal is to assist future leaders understand what the world needs to be sustainable, and to learn about issues in health and environment. Our interns spend the majority of their time following the United Nations agenda. There are 3 sessions, spring, winter and summer - all require applications.

- **Humanitarian Aid**: In conjunction with the K.Kovshevych Foundation, WIT provides humanitarian aid to schools, and orphans in areas devastated by environmental degradation.

- **Scholarship Program**: WIT assists the K.Kovshevych Foundation, in finding intellectually gifted university students in need of financial assistance to continue their studies in areas related to health and environment.

- **www.worldinfo.org** WIT provides, through its website, scientific presentations from our annual conferences held at the United Nations, the archived World Ecology Reports, and the Speaker’s Series.
Paulette Bazerman  
Retired VP, Mattel Asia Design and Development

As I reflect on COVID-19, it brought to focus my experience working in China for many years.

I was born in New York and ended up working for the toy manufacturer Mattel, Inc. in Hong Kong, China, leading teams in Asia, that developed fabrics and fashions for dolls, mainly Barbie. Yes...I dressed the most famous girl in the world! The pink-glittered, blue-eyed, blonde American icon who claimed over two hundred careers to inspire girls. I found it necessary to create my own special style...my own Personal Brand Image and follow that path. This road eventually led me to achieve success as an executive for Mattel, the multibillion-dollar toy company. From the concrete jungle of New York City, to the beaches of Los Angeles, the fish markets in Hong Kong, the rice fields in China, exotic adventures in Asia and finally back home.

I worked at Mattel headquarters in Los Angeles in the 1980’s and made my first trip for them in 1986 to Hong Kong for onsite Barbie fashion approval. I did not know where Hong Kong was located. This was before Google, and I physically had to look at a paper map and put my finger on this tiny speck in the South China Sea. After completing my assignment in Hong Kong, I wrote a proposal to Mattel management, recommending they create a design department in Hong Kong to be near the vendors and China manufacturing facilities. This would be a far more effective work flow and quality improvement versus mailing physical items across the Pacific Ocean.

Although nothing moves quickly in the corporate world, especially with a major change, my proposal was accepted and I was to create this team and lead Barbie fashion development in Asia. I accepted the challenge and in April 1992 I moved, to that tiny speck on the map, Hong Kong.

The approaching 1997 handover of Hong Kong from the British back to China was a never-ending concern for Mattel. They were heavily represented with various offices in Hong Kong and manufacturing in China. Mattel was preoccupied with looking at alternatives, in case China changed the regulations and operating procedures for USA companies. This was the perception not only of Mattel, but also of the Hong Kong staff, wondering what the future would hold under “Communist Rule.” As an insurance plan, other options for manufacturing in Asia were being considered.

We’d been living in Hong Kong for about one year and I made a conscious effort not to travel to China. Growing up in the late 20th Century in the USA, I was exposed to the news media’s information that China was the enemy. It was “Red China” and not to be trusted. Mattel had their factories and vendors in China, and I pictured those factories under lock and key with high security to prevent an imminent attack. Even my Hong Kong staff didn’t want to travel to China because of the “threat” of the communist government, personal safety, and the lack of modern conveniences. China wasn’t safe and I made every excuse to delay making the short trip across the border.

Because of my strategy to provide exceptional customer service and quality, my new organization was gaining a positive reputation. More projects were being sent to Hong Kong, which I never turned down. My philosophy was to have a positive attitude up front, then later figure out how to get the work done. More projects for my department forced me to forget about my comfort level and plan a visit to the Mattel China factories. My secretary, fearing for my safety, made the arrangements for my China trip, including an escort.

In 1993 it was considered unsafe for a western woman to travel alone to China. To be honest, I was grateful for the

Continues on Page. 18