



## INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

**“What next for Agenda 2030? The Covid-19 crisis, inequality and the Future of the SDGs”**  
**by Geneva Centre for Security Policy, 20 May 2020**

### Panellists:

**Ms Brenda Killen**, Executive in Residence Fellow, GCSP  
**Dr Lawrence Haddad**, Executive Director, Global Alliance for Improved Nutrition (GAIN)

**Dr Elizabeth Mason**, Co-Chair, UN SG's Independent Accountability Panel for Women and Children

**Mr Andreas Schleicher**, Director of Education and Skills, OECD

**Ms Anne Keeling**, Women and Global Health

### Moderator:

**Dr Jean-Marc Rickli**, Head of Global Risk and Resilience at the GCSP

**The Moderator** opened the panel by underlining that Covid-19 has an immense impact, both direct and indirect, on each of the **main pillars of SDGs**, People, Planet, Prosperity, Peace.

**Brenda Killen** confirmed that the pandemic has put achievement of the SDGs further off-track, every goal is threatened. A differential crisis between haves and have-nots is drastically deepening **inequalities**. She cited a newspaper article which said the boat in which we will be sailing to defeat the pandemic, although it may appear so, is not the same for everyone- it never was. With regard to the possibility of **postponing the 2030 deadline**, she remarked that this was not an event date, it is a deadline for transformation of world society. The virus has taken away the **luxury of planning**, of revision.

**Lawrence Haddad** addressed the issue of Covid's devastating impact on **malnutrition**, flowing from a massive collapse in income, decimation of the whole food supply system from production, processing, transport to sales, and the inability of health systems to provide coping mechanisms. To mitigate these effects, it is necessary to alert the policy-makers at the multilateral, bilateral and national levels, to **deal specifically with the food system** which, though overlapping, cannot be adequately addressed in the on-going health and economic battles. The food markets have to be kept running, cash transfers be linked to food supplies. This moment is **defined for leadership**, the danger is that very **young children** will be permanently damaged and pass on this legacy to the **next generation**. If we can avoid this, that will be our legacy.

**Andreas Schleicher** dealt with the question of **online education**, which has limited benefits. Many parameters come into play that make this a difficult model to universalise. Experience from the pandemic has demonstrated that there are huge **disparities between social groups** worldwide in this domain and these have been magnified. Students not having the possibility for online education are **stigmatized**. In many parts of the world, **teachers are not properly trained** in such education. Policy responses, to attain **SDG 4**, need to promote equity in educational opportunity and **innovation and digitalisation** in education.

**Elisabeth Masson** observed that at present, less than half the world's population lacks **access to health services**. And within countries themselves, disparities are deeply entrenched. **Mistrust** is pervasive, towards the government, the private sector, the media. Covid demonstrated that these inequities were compounded by the **lack of preparedness**. Furthermore, **health workers** themselves are being **stigmatized**, as responsible for contributing to the spread of the virus. There is clearly a **need for communications policies** and strategies to address this. Another vital need is that of **reliable data** and hence of methodologies of data collection and reporting. Finally there is a need to **institutionalize accountability**, and also to democratize it, increase the voice of the people in monitoring.



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*Anne Keeling* remarked that **viruses don't discriminate but societies do**. The social determinants of health need to be taken into account and addressed, as there are major cracks in the system. **Gender inequity** in the health force is rampant, and women need to be given a voice in policy decisions and plans of action.

### Q&A Session

A question was asked on whether there existed a **hierarchy in the SDGs**. The panel unanimously answered **no**. They were a whole package to be taken forward, they were indivisible, with synergies but not trade-offs.

A second question was that in an era of growing nationalism and isolationism, **what opportunities did SDGs offer to promote global governance**. Through movements of people, making connections regardless of governments. Scientists in the Covid crisis are transcending national governments who want to undermine multilateralism.

There is actually an **incredible coming together**. This is the spirit we need to carry forward, collective responsibility of all towards all. Hope thus lies with the people, to make changes for the better and usher in a society of equity, fairness, solidarity.