



INTERNATIONAL WEBINARS AND LIVE EVENTS

THE UN RESPONSE TO COVID-19: CONTRIBUTIONS, CHALLENGES, AND LESSONS

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Moderated by Dr Katharina Höne - Senior Researcher and Lecturer, DiploFoundation.

Ms Mirjana Spoljaric Egger - Assistant secretary-general of the UN, assistant administrator of UNDP, and director of the UNDP Regional Bureau for Europe:

This pandemic is a massive **health crisis** but also a **humanitarian and development crisis**. The world is facing massive setbacks in the implementation of the **agenda 2030**.

At the beginning of the pandemic, **UNDP** formulated a package focusing on 3 priorities:

- Strengthen the **health system**.
- Help governments setting up **humanitarian responses** to the crisis.
- Respond to the **social economic** and human rights impact of the crisis.

What we are seeing now is a real **test for the UN** and its coordination functions. UNDP, UNICEF, WHO and the UN in general adapted very quickly to the crisis. We are preparing for one of **the biggest depressions** since the WWII. At that time, the UN was not born yet, so **this is the UN moment now**.

The UN provides a **platform** where all stakeholders can come together and decide on which action and decisions to make. UN is also about **impartiality, objectivity, and universality**. It is the only such organization in the world. We need a global response and the **UN has a central role** to play in this.

One key lesson learned is that we must bring in much faster and more systematic **science and new technologies into the development sector**. Scientists must be able to speak with politicians.

We must **build back** better; it will be a key aspect of the **post-covid situation**. We must look at the gender gap, the digital gap, ethnic minorities, greening the economy and rethink the **economic order**.

Mr Moez Chakchouk - Assistant Director-General for Communication & Information at UNESCO:

Current crisis shows that **multilateralism** is more important than ever, and the **UN has a key role to play** to ensure the effectiveness of responses.

In the field of communication, the role of media workers to **provide accurate information** is more vital than ever. We developed resources to **tackle disinformation**. Ensure equal and **universal access to information** is a central part of the response to COVID19.

The pandemic was an **opportunity for all UN agencies** to work together. My department at UNESCO never worked with WHO before. We learned how to **work together much more efficiently**. Regarding the world press Freedom Day, we have been working hard online and delivered same results as during previous years. We need to consider this for **future events**.

Within the UN family, UNESCO prepared the recommendations about disinformation and infodemic. It was really appreciated. It could be an important **momentum for all of us to work together**. It is also the good moment to highlight the importance of working on the field.

UNESCO is a complex organization, with many different sectors. It is the same within the UN family. This crisis allowed us to **coordinate internally** to provide the best response possible. There is a need to work together with UNESCO, UNDP, WHO and other UN agencies.

We also learned that it was a **momentum to keep freedom of expression** and access to information protected. We are seeing how important these rights are, during the crisis we see attacks on journalists and freedom of speech. It shows how important **transparent and free information** is.