



Urgent Statement by the Civil 20 to the G20 Virtual Summit: **New Realities Require New Priorities**

As G20 Leaders prepare to convene an extraordinary virtual summit next week to discuss a coordinated response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its human and economic implications, the **Civil Society 20 Engagement Group** asks that G20 leaders respond carefully, urgently and collectively to the global crisis that continues to unfold as a result of the outbreak. The events of this year alone, starting with the bushfires in Australia and moving to the outbreak of the SARS-CoV-2 virus, underscored the ever-growing complexity of our global shared challenges. It also **exposes the weaknesses of the current dominant economic system** that governs our world and how it deepens inequalities between individuals and countries. It marginalizes whole groups, it relies upon material consumption, and it exacerbates climate change. We ask that G20 leaders recognize our new global reality and **reorient this year's G20 priorities** towards building more resilient global economic arrangement and governance.

The outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic poses a serious threat to sustainable development and the 2030 SDGs Decade of Action. In this time of crisis, G20 leaders need to uphold the **principles of human rights, civic engagement, and democracy**. As the crisis develops, the C20 observes with great alarm the continued deterioration for many vulnerable groups in different societies, including: those living in poverty, refugees, women, the homeless, the elderly, young people, indigenous groups and many more. We stress that governments must protect and extend medical help to all people **without exception**.

The coronavirus crisis has shown the deficiency of public trust in government. The information deficiency -what we call an **infodemic**- that surrounds the disease, is equally fatal as the virus. The C20 stands in solidarity with all communities who are suffering, but most particularly those where unnecessary harm came from a lack of transparency and honesty about the outbreak of the disease. We stress that governments must be **accountable** in their response to the crisis, and work on empowering local communities, civil society actors, and local leaders in responding to the outbreak.

One of the lessons we can learn from previous public health emergencies and pandemics is the importance of **quality care continuum**, protection of human rights, fighting stigma against people living with the disease in the affected communities. To meet new and existing threats, new approaches to research and more funding are needed. COVID-19 is a sobering – and urgent – reminder that we need to **increase investment in what works**: strong international partnerships, building universally accessible health care delivery systems, and investment in research and development. In this respect, the C20 urges that G20 leaders consider the recommendations in the [statement on pandemic preparedness](#) released jointly with the Business 20, Labor 20, Think 20, Women 20 and Youth 20.



Another lesson stemming from this crisis, is that **hyper-globalization** of our supply chains makes our trade systems extremely vulnerable to shocks. The C20 cautions G20 leaders against the ongoing attempts in trade agreement negotiations to open “health markets” to foreign investors and competition, turning health systems into yet another investment opportunity. The C20 is worried that the divide between those who can afford healthcare and those who cannot will be exacerbated. All G20 governments are urged to commit to **universal health coverage**.

The C20 warns against the expected **inequalities that will ensue as a consequence** of the pandemic. Labour policies need to be put in place to address the needs of the most vulnerable, who cannot afford to sit at home, and prepare for the expected rise in unemployment, working poverty- especially in countries with a high informal economy- and for groups with a precarious attachment to the labour market. As such, the C20 encourages all G20 countries to work with international organizations and international financial institutions to ensure that governments and employers are protecting workers and safeguarding their rights, including: **paid sick leave for those who are affected, income support and healthcare provisions for all**.

The world is in need of multilateral coordination to effectively respond to the economic crisis and provide adequate fiscal and monetary stimulus, while safeguarding liquidity from **misuse by speculative activities**. A fairly designed stimulus package should take into account not only the interest of businesses and SMEs, but also **households, workers, and the vulnerable**. Austerity measures generally reduce spending on human services, with devastating and negative social consequences. Even so-called strong economies have demonstrated an inability to cope with the pandemic. G20 countries should carefully attend to the economic crisis while **guaranteeing social protection programs are adequately funded**, and are strengthened to benefit those most in need.

A problem with multiple dimensions requires a solution by multiple actors. Members of Civil Society and humanitarian NGOs continue to face tightened financial restrictions due to risk and cost aversion by banks in complying with anti-money laundering and counter terrorism financing (AML-CTF) regulations. Such **financial exclusion** limits their ability to respond to global emergencies, including the COVID-19 outbreak. The C20 asks G20 leaders to take the opportunity of this year’s FATF Strategic Review to request robust sectoral risk assessments that lead to effective measures which **do not hamper legitimate charitable activity** in anyway.

The C20 commends G20 Leaders for calling for this emergency meeting, and strongly ask them to take immediate action in responding to the substantial impact on education and the **dwindling prospects of ensuring access** at this moment, [as 50% of young people](#) across the world are out of education.

The stark reality ushered in by the rapid spread of COVID-19 has shown that we are, as a global community, **entirely unequipped to maintain a promise of “education for all”**; particularly in contexts where classrooms can no longer provide a safe environment for this to take place. Rather, we face the prospect of education for a very limited, very privileged few. Urgent and agile responses are required by global leaders in collaboration with global ICT providers to combat the **inadaptability and inaccessibility of education technology** and its provision. While investment has poured into technological innovations in recent years, not enough funding or attention has been paid to establishing adequate infrastructure and networks of Ed-tech provision in many regions in the Global South. As such the impacts of this crisis have been felt most significantly by the communities most in need.

Furthermore, young people have been pushed into a virtual world without adequate protections from increased risks of cyber space. While we have witnessed our leaders’ commitments to cyber security and the countering threats therein at a national level, we have yet to see this emphasis on a human level. At a time where our youth have either lost access entirely or have been fortunate enough to continue their education online, we urge our leaders to usher multilateral measures to ensure adequate **digital citizenship education** for cyber safety and protection is achieved, and to reverse the impact of COVID-19 on access to education for all.

The C20 calls on G20 leaders to expand this year’s G20 presidency to **address the following priorities**:

- **Enhance global pandemic preparedness**, through: strengthening global outbreak response capacity in light of the Sendai Framework, reforming public health systems, and facilitating R&D advancements. The joint [statement on pandemic preparedness](#) released jointly with the Business 20, Labor 20, Think 20, Women 20 and Youth 20, provides more concrete actions and recommendations.
- Respond to the changes in the labour market through **designing and expanding social protection systems**, especially to those most affected, namely: women, refugees, people living with working poverty, care workers, people with disabilities, and youth.
- Support the development of Online Protection Tools that allow for monitoring and control of children’s access to inappropriate materials and content and enhance safety measures from internet threats and predators. Including the development of national metrics to monitor **child online safety**.

- Coordinate government efforts and work in coalition with IGOs/NGOs, and ICT and EdTech providers on short and long-term investment in the expansion of ICT infrastructure and technologies to ensure access for all young people to eLearning and ICT enabled education, to be accessible across borders in terms of content and access to skilled online teachers. **Priority should put on increasing accessibility to internet in remote areas and in the Global South.**
- Address arising risks to **debt sustainability** in low-income countries (LICs) and lower-middle income countries (LMICs) as they face urgent financing needs to improve health systems capacity to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak. These measures should include supporting **moratoria on debt payments** for vulnerable developing countries, to **free up fiscal space** to strengthen their public health capacity and improve urgent social protection measures for the most vulnerable population.
- Attend to Emerging Markets and developing countries **exposure to volatile capital flows**, in the context of an unprecedented period of outflows, commodity price volatility and the impact of the COVID-19 outbreak, to support the use of macro-prudential policies to address sudden stops and **ensure financial stability**. We stress that austerity budget measures on social spending are to be avoided.
- In efforts to ensure a strengthened global financial safety net, push for **increased availability of central bank currency swap lines to Emerging Markets**, recognizing the potential spillover effects from overleveraged private sector heightened by the COVID-19 pandemic.

// END

[Civil Society 20 \(C20\)](#) is one of the eight Engagement Groups of the G20. It provides a platform of Civil Society Organizations around the world to bring forth a non-government and non-business voice.