



T20 2020 Journey

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In mid-2019 the King Abdullah Petroleum Studies and Research Center (KAPSARC) and the King Faisal Center for Research and Islamic Studies (KFCRIS) were appointed co-hosts of the Think 20 (T20), the engagement group that serves as the G20's 'ideas bank.' I was honored to be appointed T20 Chair, and it has been a privilege to oversee such a momentous and large-scale undertaking. It has brought together over 600 authors and global policy experts, representing 56 countries and 440 institutions to help world leaders address global problems. We have generated many actionable policy proposals in 146 policy briefs that have the potential to benefit the world in many ways. These policy briefs have been condensed into the 32 proposals of the T20 Communiqué, which were presented to the G20 Secretariat at the T20 Summit, on October 31 and November 1. These proposals provide solutions to the most pressing global challenges facing countries today and are guided by T20 Saudi Arabia's vision of striving for a future of prosperity, sustainability and inclusion.

We had planned to host many T20 events, including the T20 Summit, physically. Our Inception Conference was a tremendous success. The global spread of COVID-19 soon after disrupted many of our plans, but it enabled new ways of working. Though travel was obviously very difficult, we held many meetings and webinars online with our colleagues and partner institutions. The impact of the pandemic both exacerbated existing issues facing the world and created new ones. We responded to this new global paradigm with the creation of an additional task force, Task Force 11: (COVID-19) Multidisciplinary Approaches to Complex Problems.

The T20 feeds into the G20 process through facilitating interactions among G20 members and the policy community, generating concrete and feasible policy recommendations, assessing G20 results and guiding G20 policymaking, and communicating with the broader public about issues of global importance. The five themes of T20 Saudi Arabia were Climate and Environment; Women and Youth; Multilateralism; Economic Development and Finance; Sustainable Resources, and Technology and Digitalization.

The COVID-19 pandemic has reconfirmed what was already well established: Health is a global public good, and it can only be achieved effectively through worldwide partnerships and cooperation. We are as strong as our weakest link. Only through our shared responsibility can we achieve global preparedness for shared emergencies. We have called on the G20 to reaffirm the significance of health as a global public good, embrace comprehensive and universal healthcare coverage, and promote global solidarity and multilateralism in response to COVID-19. There have been nearly 40 million confirmed cases of COVID-19 and over 1 million deaths reported to the World Health Organization. This tragic loss of life and the suffering of people around the world, as well as the disruptions to our economies and societies, has been a powerful reminder of our shared vulnerabilities. These are unprecedented times that call for unprecedented collective action.

COVID-19 has also been responsible for the cancellation of many global events, including the climate-focused COP26 and the biodiversity-focused COP15. Climate change is an urgent global crisis. The G20 must reinforce the need to keep commitments on climate change and biodiversity at the forefront of the global agenda. To achieve this, we recommended utilizing a circular carbon economy approach to ensure carbon-neutral energy transitions, strengthening cooperation on climate action to support sustainable and climate-resilient economic growth and recovery, and protecting, conserving and restoring biodiversity.

The coronavirus pandemic is being felt most harshly by our most vulnerable populations – women, youth, the poor and the elderly. The international community must take urgent action to ensure that the COVID-19 pandemic does not exacerbate social divisions and thus contribute to global instability. Humans are our greatest assets. To promote empowerment and economic equity for women, youth, and vulnerable groups, we called on the G20 to increase funding for innovative educational solutions that meet the needs of today's youth while

creating conditions to prevent future education losses. We also recommended that the G20 countries coordinate government policies to limit the economic impact of the COVID-19 crisis, adapting international efforts to support the most vulnerable nations and at-risk populations, and develop policies that protect the physical health and economic wellbeing of migrant workers, preparing them for more stable and prosperous futures.

Global economic concerns and financial distress require multilateral solutions. The G20 must consider ways to better support and cooperate with multilateral organizations so that they serve their purposes in an efficient, inclusive, and sustainable manner. We called on the G20 to institute internal reforms to ensure the sustainability and legitimacy of the rules-based multilateral order and improve multilateral cooperation among G20 members and non-members alike. We also recommended the scale-up of multilateral G20 stakeholder engagement to tackle existing policy challenges that affect the global economy, such as public health, climate change, and global conflict. Lastly, we recommended that the G20 promote innovative frameworks that help bridge the investment gap for sustainable and resilient infrastructure.

Growing levels of intranational income and wealth inequality, and changes in the structure of global trade, demographics, and immigration have led to the erosion of social cohesion within many states. Cohesive societies lay the foundation for the health of nations. We called on the G20 to adopt a holistic approach to implementing the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals, including integrating common social values and shared faith-based principles. We also recommended that the G20 take measures to mitigate the adverse effects of demographic transitions, and work toward coordinated tax reform as a means of addressing growing levels of inequality that threaten social cohesion.

Food, water, and energy are core pillars of economic prosperity. As such, the affordability, sustainability, and security of these resources are central to geopolitical and economic discourse. We called on the G20 to promote measures that support technology and innovation to create a sustainable and stable global food market, preserve energy security and market stability to ensure a prosperous future, and overcome policy fragmentation and promote innovation to facilitate a sustainable water-energy-food nexus.

This pandemic has highlighted the value of the digital world. G20-informed policy agendas, regulatory mechanisms, tools, and innovations must adapt to the impact of digitalization on humanity, including its social and economic ecosystems. To harness the potential of digital technologies for all, we have called on the G20 to support the construction of norms and standards to tackle new challenges impacting the global economy, such as artificial intelligence and cyberspace. We have also recommended that G20 countries extend digital financial literacy to disadvantaged groups – including forcibly displaced populations – to achieve equitable financial inclusion in the digital age, and ensure a safe and secure online ecosystem that protects citizens' autonomy – particularly that of children and youth.

The T20's legacy has been passed from Japan to Saudi Arabia, and it will now be extended to Italy and India. With a hopeful mind for the future, we pass the torch to our Italian partners and wish them the best of luck with T20 Italy 2021. We stand ready to assist the T20's future work and help lay solid foundations for a future of prosperity, sustainability and inclusion.

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