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# GLOBAL POLICY ANALYSIS

NIZAMI GANJAVI INTERNATIONAL CENTER

**ESCALATION OF  
NAGORNO-KARABAKH  
CONFLICT**



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## FROM MANAGING EDITOR

I would like to extend a very warm welcome to the readership of GPA Journal. I take this opportunity to offer a word of thanks to our readers, contributors and authors, all of whom have volunteered to contribute to the success of the journal. Based on the feedback from the field and the obvious excitement around the journal is taking steps towards this goal already before its 4th issue.

The GPA journal encompasses up-to-date, and original contributions - research papers, reviews, and articles dealing with questions of how, why and when of diversified topics and succeed, fail and disappear, and what can be done to influence the outcome. The topics covered in this September issue of the journal include but not limited to: "Better Societies for Tomorrow"; Rebuilding Post-COVID-19 Africa with Global Partners"; Challenges of Pandemic"; "China, United States and Europe at the Time of Covid-19" "Breaking a Vicious Circle around Nagorno-Karabakh".

Due to the ongoing pandemic, the physical activities of the center shifted its base to virtual platforms. During these high times the NGIC actively partnered with like minded organizations and jointly organized web-conferences and actively participated in awareness-raising initiatives by solidarity video messages of its members. On the margins of 75th anniversary session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA) in September 2020, the NGIC held a two-day big on-line convention in September with 9 sessions to discuss the changing realities in specific groups of countries, since each region has its history and its specificities.

The Center also played an active and crucial role by being both initiator and partner to the more than 10 statements and appeals that addressed to the governments' of G20 countries in order to address the world's most pressing challenges particularly the "COVID-19 pandemic", "Global Ceasefire", "Call for Support for the People of Yemen", "Peace and Justice for Nagorno-Karabakh" and so on.

At a time when all of humanity is fighting a common enemy in the Coronavirus and COVID-19, it is not sensible for humanity to divert energies and resources to unleash death and destruction on each other. Recent (27 2020) Armenian armed forces' gross violation of the ceasefire in the Azerbaijani-Armenian proper border adjacent region Ganja, Barda, Tovuz by using artillery and death of 90 Azerbaijani civilians showed the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict cannot be regarded as quiescent. By doing so, NGIC initiated an appeal which was signed by 40 heads of state and government indicating their full support for the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan within the borders as recognized by the United Nations and the whole international community.

I close this message by inviting everyone to submit their exciting research and articles to GPA. Any papers that you wish to submit, either individually or co-operatively, are much appreciated and will make a substantial contribution to the development and success of the journal.

**ROVSHAN MURADOV**  
*Managing Editor, GPA*  
*Secretary General, NGIC*

## NIZAMI GANJAVI INTERNATIONAL CENTER APPEAL ON PEACE AND JUSTICE FOR NAGORNO-KARABAKH

We fully support the territorial integrity and sovereignty of the Republic of Azerbaijan within the borders as recognized by the United Nations and the whole international community.

Azerbaijan has received strong international legal support: no less than four resolutions of the UN Security Council demanding unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian troops from the occupied territories. That and the international community has reaffirmed that it does not recognize the acquisition of territory by war. The situation resulting from the illegal use of force can in no way be justified.

We strongly condemn indiscriminate targeting of Azerbaijani civilians and civilian objects along the border of Armenia and Azerbaijan. Illegal activities, as well as illicit settlement in the occupied lands of Azerbaijan must be ceased.

And today, despite the provocations, and the breach of the ceasefire agreement, Azerbaijan is seeking redress through the appropriate legal channels, not rushing into armed response. Conflict is frequently indecisive, and invariably costly in blood as well as resources.

This is the time to activate all possible diplomatic channels, the UN and the European Union should call for an immediate ceasefire, and use every means available at the international level to prevent any further military action. But it is also essential to advance the search for a final settlement of that long-standing conflict. To work for peace through peaceful means, that is one of the tenets of the Nizami Ganjavi International Center (NGIC). Thus, we call on the international community to live up to its previous resolutions, particularly United Nations Security Council Resolutions to restore the territorial integrity of Azerbaijan under international law, ensure withdrawal of Armenian armed forces from all seized lands of Azerbaijan as demanded and hopefully reach a lasting settlement of the Armenia-Azerbaijan conflict.

The negotiation process mediated by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs – Russia, France and the United States – has not brought any tangible result for the resolution of conflict. The Co-Chairs based on their mandate stemming from the Helsinki Final Act and the UNSCR should redouble their efforts to ensure meaningful negotiations towards achieving lasting peace.

At a time when all of humanity is fighting a common enemy in the Coronavirus and COVID-19, it is not sensible for humanity to divert our energies and resources to unleash death and destruction on each other. Let us appeal to reason and the rule of law in our pursuit of a peaceful and just settlement to the conflict of Nagorno-Karabakh.

Peace, true peace, is more than the cessation of war. It can only be built on justice and inclusion. That is a fitting task for the EU to assist in bringing about, and it would be an appropriate revival of the spirit of the United Nations on its 75th birthday. So let us work with the international community to overcome the unjust legacies of the past, to address our global challenges and to lay the foundations for better tomorrows.



## Signed:

**Vaira Vike-Freiberga**, Co-Chair NGIC, President of Latvia 1999-2007

**Ismail Serageldin**, Co-Chair NGIC, Vice-President of the World Bank 1992-2000

**H.R.H Prince Turki bin Faisal Al Saud**, Chairman of King Faisal Foundation's Center for Research and Islamic Studies

**Abdulaziz Altwaijri**, former Director General of ISESCO

**Shaukat Aziz**, Prime Minister of Pakistan 2004-2007

**Rashid Alimov**, Secretary General of, Shanghai Cooperation Organization 2016-2019

**Rosalia Arteago**, President of Ecuador 1997

**Sali Berisha**, President of Albania 1992-1997, Prime Minister 2005-2013

**Hikmet Cetin**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey 1991-1994

**Emil Constantinescu**, President of Romania 1996-2000

**Mirko Cvetkovic**, Prime Minister of Serbia 2008-2012

**Franco Frattini**, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Italy 2002-2004; 2008-2011, European Commissioner for Justice, Freedom and Security 2004-2008

**Ameenah Gurib-Fakim**, President of Mauritius 2015-2018

**Jan Fisher**, Prime Minister of the Czech Republic 2009-2010

**Ekmeledin Ihsanoglu**, Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation 2004-2014

**Mladen Ivanic**, President of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014-2018

**Dalia Itzik**, President of Israel 2007, President of Knesset 2006-2009

**Gjorge Ivanov**, President of North Macedonia 2009-2019

**Ivo Josipovic**, President of Croatia 2010-2015

**Jadranka Kosor**, Prime Minister of Croatia 2009-2011

**Aleksander Kwasniewski**, President of Poland 1995-2005

**Yves Leterme**, Prime Minister of Belgium 2008, 2009-2011

**Zlatko Lagumdzija**, Prime Minister 2001-2002, deputy Prime Minister, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2012-2015

**Petru Lucinschi**, President of Moldova 1997-2001

**Amre Moussa**, Secretary General Arab League 2001-2011, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt 1991-2001

**Rovshan Muradov**, Secretary-General NGIC

**Rexhep Meidani**, President of Albania 1997-2002

**Elnur Aliyev**, CEO NGIC

**Bujar Nishani**, President of Albania 2012-2017

**Djoomart Otorbayev**, Prime Minister of Kyrgyzstan 2014-2015

**Elsa Papademetriou**, former Vice-President of the Hellenic Parliament

**Rosen Plevneliev**, President of Bulgaria 2012-2017

**Oscar Ribas Reig**, Prime Minister of Andorra 1982-84; 1990-94

**Petar Stoyanov**, President of Bulgaria 1997-2002

**Boris Tadic**, President of Serbia 2004-2012

**Eka Tkeshelashvili**, deputy Prime Minister of Georgia 2010-2012

**Filip Vujanovic**, President of Montenegro 2003-2018

**Viktor Yushchenko**, President of Ukraine 2010-2015

**Kateryna Yushchenko**, First Lady of Ukraine 2010-2015

**Valdis Zatlers**, President of Latvia 2007-2011

## 'Sine quo non for breaking a vicious circle around Nagorno-Karabakh

Dr. Gulshan Pashayeva

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The July escalation on the border of Tovuz district of Azerbaijan and Tavush region of Armenia along the Armenian-Azerbaijani international border as well as a recent counter-offensive operation conducted by the Azerbaijani army due to large-scale provocation initiated by Armenian's armed forces along the Line of Contact (LoC) on September 27, 2020 have drawn international spotlight to the long-standing confrontation between Armenia and Azerbaijan over Nagorno-Karabakh and the surrounding territories, which has been occupied by the Armenian military forces since the early 1990s. The conflict zone covers nearly all the territory of the former Nagorno-Karabakh Autonomous Oblast (NKAO) and an additional seven adjacent administrative districts (Lachin, Kalbajar, Agdam, Fizuly, Jabrail, Gubatli, and Zangilan) surrounding NKAO. These vast, occupied territories have been outside Azerbaijani government control for more than a quarter of a century. Over 20,000 Azerbaijanis were killed and around one million were displaced in the course of this armed conflict. In its leading judgment of 16 June 2015 in the case of "Chiragov and Others v. Armenia", the Grand Chamber of the European Court of Human Rights established that from the early days of the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict Armenia has had a significant and decisive influence over the separatist regime created in the occupied Azerbaijani territories, that survives by virtue of the military, political, financial and other support given it by Armenia which, consequently, exercises effective control over Nagorno-Karabakh and other occupied territories of Azerbaijan.

Needless to say, that although this conflict has been managed through the ceasefire agreement that was signed by the conflicting parties in May 1994 and many attempts have been made to find a political solution, it has not yet been resolved. A 'no war, no peace' situation has persisted over the years - presumably with the common understanding that this is a typical frozen conflict without any real potential to break out again. This approach is, perhaps, also reflected in the work of mediators, in particular, the OSCE Minsk Group, whose efforts have, over the years, been reactive rather than proactive. Despite the fact that the co-chairs of the Minsk Group have more than once declared the status quo unacceptable, they have mainly focused on preventing an escalation of the conflict, rather than making a resolution happen.

On the other hand, despite the leading global and regional powers' and international organizations' confirmed commitment to Azerbaijan's sovereignty and territorial integrity within its internationally recognized borders, they have so far opposed any attempts to use

any sanctions against Armenia. In fact, owing to the lack of political will of the international community, the four legally binding UN Security Council resolutions (specifically, 822, 853, 874 and 884) adopted in 1993, that demand full and unconditional withdrawal of the Armenian armed forces from the occupied territories of Azerbaijan have not yet been implemented by Armenia.

Thus, a 'syndrome of impunity' has contributed not only to the uncompromising position of Armenia in the negotiation process, but also to the consolidation by this country of the results of its military occupation. This leaves us with the following consequences:

**First of all**, Armenia and the separatist regime created in the occupied Azerbaijani territories, which has not been recognized by any other state, including its kin-state Armenia refuse any final status short of independence for Nagorno-Karabakh.

**Secondly**, the fate of seven occupied Azerbaijani districts surrounding the former NKAO, which is also one of the important sticking points in the negotiation process, is very vague. The international community frequently fails to distinguish the territory of the former NKAO from these seven other adjacent, occupied Azerbaijani districts, which were transformed by Armenian forces into 'buffer zone' and came to be considered as bargaining chips in the negotiation process. Initially, the official Yerevan stance envisaged returning these seven districts as bargaining chips back to Azerbaijan on securing its demands, but the situation has, apparently, changed in recent years. The US Ambassador to Armenia Richard Mills while completing his diplomatic mission in this country also touched upon this issue in an interview with the Armenian website EVN. He said that he was surprised when he first got here and found out that most Armenians he met were adamantly opposed to the return of the occupied territories as part of a negotiation settlement. Ambassador Mills noted that return of land was one of the core principles of the Madrid Principles. "It has long been my government's understanding of why the occupied territories were originally seized; they would be land for a peace option," he said. "So I was very surprised that there was no support for that anymore". On the other hand, according to the Executive Summary of the 2010 report prepared by the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs' Field Assessment Mission to Azerbaijan's occupied territories surrounding Karabakh, "for administrative purposes, the seven

\* Mostly inhabited by ethnic Armenians, NKAO was established within the borders of the Azerbaijan Soviet Socialist Republic on 7 July, 1923, and the town of Khanikandi was designated as its administrative center.

\* United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR). Available at: [http://unazerbaijan.org/en/un\\_agencies/united-nations-high-commissioner-for-refugees/](http://unazerbaijan.org/en/un_agencies/united-nations-high-commissioner-for-refugees/)

\* Judgment (Merit). Case of Chiragov and Others v. Armenia (Application no. 13216/05). European Court of Human Rights, Strasbourg, 16 June 2015, p. 68.

\* U.S. Ambassador Mills: I Leave Inspired and Hopeful. EVNReport, Oct 15 2018. Available at: <https://www.evnreport.com/politics/u-s-ambassador-mills-i-leave-inspired-and-hopeful>

\* Executive Summary of the "Report of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs' Field Assessment Mission to the

\* Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan Surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh", 24 March 2011. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/mg/76209?download=true%20-%20>



territories, the former [Nagorno-Karabakh] Oblast, and other areas have been incorporated into eight new districts”.

Although Pashinyan government raised some hopes for progress in negotiations over the Nagorno-Karabakh conflict and high-profile meetings were held between the heads of states and the foreign ministers of Armenia and Azerbaijan between 2018 and 2020, the peace process has not yielded any results due to the several provocative statements of the current Armenian establishment. We will now take a closer look at two statements that have been made by high-ranking officials of Pashinyan government on the fate of the seven Azerbaijani districts surrounding the former NKAO.

On February 27, 2019 the then Director of Armenian National Security Service Artur Vanetsyan, during his visit to the occupied Azerbaijani territories after learning about resettlement efforts under way in southern Hadrut near the Arax River, made particular mention of Araxavan, a new village designed for up to 150 homes, with adjacent land and work facilities, located in a strategic area adjoining both Azerbaijan and Iran. Assessing this program as an important guarantee of national security, Artur Vanetsyan concluded: “The program that we call a resettlement program, in my and everyone’s assessment, will be the main guarantee of our country’s security. Because there are those speeches, those expressions, and those people who always manipulate this subject as if lands will be returned, will be negotiated, conceded, etc. As a result of that program, we will send a clear message to all our people and the world that we have no intention to give an inch of land; on the contrary, our compatriots must settle on those lands and build our country” (Emphasis added). The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Azerbaijan strongly reacted to this statement by underlining, in particular, that it is “a blatant attack against a years-long negotiating process under the auspices of the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs, contrary to its essence and logic, especially in light of the results of the last meeting of Azerbaijani and Armenian foreign ministers in Paris”.

Another statement belongs to the current Armenian Defense Minister, Davit Tonoyan, who, at the meeting with representatives of the Armenian community in New York on March 29, 2019, pointedly announced: “I, as the Defense Minister [of Armenia], say that the option of return of ‘territories for peace’ will no longer exist, and I have re-formulated it into “new territories in the event of a new war”.

Thus, presumably, the Armenian government and society are not so keen to return these territories back to Azerbaijan on their own accord without strong pressure from the external actors at present.

**Thirdly**, the Armenian government has pursued the policy of illegal settlement in the occupied Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding areas of Azerbaijan over the years. Sources, including Armenian ones, report that tens of thousands of settlers have moved to the occupied territories of Azerbaijan, including the districts of Lachin, Kalbajar, Zangilan and Jabrayil adjacent to the Nagorno-Karabakh region, in an organized manner with the purpose of annexing these territories.

In fact, two missions to the occupied Azerbaijani territories conducted by the OSCE in 2005 and 2010 found evidence of the presence of Armenian settlers in the occupied territories. According to the Executive Summary of the 2010 Report of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs’ Field Assessment Mission to Azerbaijan’s occupied territories surrounding Karabakh “while no reliable figures exist, the overall population is roughly estimated as 14,000 persons, living in small settlements and in the towns of Lachin and Kelbajar. The Co-Chairs assess that there has been no significant growth in the population since 2005” . At the same time the co-chairmen again urged “[...] to avoid any activities in the territories [...] that would prejudice a final settlement or change the character of these areas”.

However, the separatist regime created in the occupied territories of Azerbaijan has been working very hard, together with Armenia and the Armenian Diaspora, toward the illegal resettlement of thousands of Armenians in the occupied Azerbaijani territories as well as the subsequent implementation of illegal activities and infrastructure projects. It’s no surprise that “Armenian settlers are housed in homes that belonged to Azerbaijani residents and new settlements build by Armenian authorities” because the aims of such a policy are very clear. Illegally settling Armenians from different parts of the world in the occupied Azerbaijani territories by Armenia and the separatist regime created in the occupied territories in Azerbaijan is intended to artificially increase the number of inhabitants of ethnic Armenian origin and create obstacles to the return of Azerbaijani IDPs forcefully expelled from Nagorno-Karabakh and surrounding districts. Resettling Lebanese people of Armenian origin in Nagorno-Karabakh is the latest wave of this policy: “The Foreign Ministry of Azerbaijan has raised its serious protest against the illegal settlement policy pursued by Armenia, in particular the resettlement of ethnic Armenians from Lebanon to the Nagorno-Karabakh region and surrounding areas of Azerbaijan, to the OSCE Minsk Group co-chairs and within the relevant international organizations” . At the same time, Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan Hikmat Hajiyev, noted that, even as the countries of the world, including Azerbaijan, are dealing with the issue of the consequences of the tragedy that occurred in Lebanon, “Armenia has once again demonstrated

\* New settlements in Artsakh: Leyla Abdullayeva vs. Artur Vanetsyan. *Mediamax.am*. March 1, 2019. Available at: <https://mediamax.am/en/news/foreignpolicy/32479/>

\* “Not an inch of land”: Vanetsyan’s statement a welcome sign for Artsakh. *Armenianweekly.com*, March 6, 2019. Available at: <https://armenianweekly.com/2019/03/06/not-an-inch-of-land/>

\* Azerbaijan urges OSCE MG to condemn provocative statements by Armenian leadership. *News.az*. 2 March 2019. Available at: <https://www.news.az/news/azerbaijan-urges-osce-mg-to-condemn-provocative-statements-by-armenian-leadership>

\* New Territories in the Event of New War, Says Defense Minister. *Asbarez.com*, April 1, 2019. Available at: <http://asbarez.com/178701/new-territories-in-the-event-of-new-war-says-defense-minister/>

\* Ambassador Araz Azimov. “Armenia-Azerbaijan Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Historical Background, Legal Aspects and Negotiation Process.” in *Azerbaijan in Global Politics Crafting Foreign Policy* (Baku, Azerbaijan Diplomatic Academy, 2009), p. 283.

\* Report of the OSCE Fact-Finding Mission (FFM) to the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan Surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh (NK), 30 January - 5 February 2005 Available at:

[https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004\\_2009/documents/ld/dsca20050413\\_08/dsca20050413\\_08en.pdf](https://www.europarl.europa.eu/meetdocs/2004_2009/documents/ld/dsca20050413_08/dsca20050413_08en.pdf). Executive Summary of the “Report of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs’ Field Assessment Mission to the Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan Surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh”, 24 March 2011. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/mg/76209/download=true%20-%20>

\* Executive Summary of the “Report of the OSCE Minsk Group Co-Chairs’ Field Assessment Mission to the

\* Occupied Territories of Azerbaijan Surrounding Nagorno-Karabakh”, 24 March 2011. Available at: <https://www.osce.org/mg/76209/download=true%20-%20>

\* *Ibid.*

\* Svante Cornell and Brenda Shaffer. *Occupied Elsewhere: Selective Policies on Occupation, Protracted Conflicts, and Territorial Disputes*. January 2020, p.29. Available at:

<https://www.fidd.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/01/fidd-report-occupied-elsewhere-selective-policies-on-occupations-protracted-conflicts-and-territorial-disputes.pdf>

\* Azerbaijan’s Foreign Ministry: The Armenian leadership is undermining the negotiated settlement of the conflict with its policy of annexation. *Azertag.az*, 14.09.2020. Available at:

[https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijans\\_Foreign\\_Ministry\\_The\\_Armenian\\_leadership\\_is\\_undermining\\_the\\_negotiated\\_settlement\\_of\\_the\\_conflict\\_with\\_its\\_policy\\_of\\_annexation-1583817](https://azertag.az/en/xeber/Azerbaijans_Foreign_Ministry_The_Armenian_leadership_is_undermining_the_negotiated_settlement_of_the_conflict_with_its_policy_of_annexation-1583817)



that it recognizes no moral values”. Adding that the population resettled in the occupied Azerbaijani territories “has become a victim of Armenia’s reckless and adventurist policy”, he also underlined that “according to international law, the pursuit of illegal settlement policy by the occupying power in the occupied territories should be classified as a military crime. In this regard, Armenia’s illegal settlement policy across Azerbaijan’s occupied territories is a military crime” .

Finally, Armenia resorted to an armed attack against Azerbaijan along the Armenia-Azerbaijan state border in the Tovuz direction from 12 to 16 July, which was provocative in nature and has the aim of derailing the negotiation process by any means. At the same time, it was Armenia’s intention to involve the political-military organization of which it is a member in this conflict. Again, as pointed out by the Assistant to the President of the Republic of Azerbaijan and Head of the Department of Foreign Policy Affairs of the Presidential Administration of the Republic of Azerbaijan, Hikmat Hajiyev “Armenia’s act of aggression perpetrated in the direction of Tovuz district, along the state border between the two countries this July and an attempt to carry out a subversion operation across the Line of Contact reveal that Armenia is preparing for yet another provocation and military adventurism”.

On September 19, President of the Republic of Azerbaijan Ilham Aliyev negatively assessed the current stage of Karabakh peace talks at a groundbreaking ceremony for the Absheron field offshore operations held at the Heydar Aliyev Baku Deep Water Jackets Plant. He particularly mentioned that negotiations are virtually non-existent and “in fact, the Armenian leader has disrupted the process of negotiations” . Thus, due to the extremely provocative behavior of the Armenian leadership the negotiation process has stalled today and without significant diplomatic commitment, the risk of outbreak of violence remains extremely high, which in fact has been proven by the latest developments. Sine quo non or an essential condition for breaking a vicious circle around Nagorno-Karabakh is to speed up the early political settlement of this conflict, which is not “frozen” anymore. At the same time a common approach should be applied by the international community in regard to occupiers and the states the territories of which have been occupied. This issue has also been raised by the foreign minister Jeyhun Bayramov during the meeting with French Ambassador to Azerbaijan Zakari Gross on September 15, 2020. The minister noted in particular that “the balanced approach to the aggressor state Armenia and Azerbaijan, the territories of which have been under occupation for almost 30 years was wrong” . Therefore, the OSCE Minsk Group should not hesitate to adopt a strong and determined stance on the issue of Armenia’s occupation of Nagorno-Karabakh and its surrounding regions. As J.Popjanevski notes, “Armenia’s significant troop presence in Azerbaijani territory constitutes a clear violation of recognized international law and standards. If unchallenged, these risks setting dangerous precedents in international practice with implications beyond the region” .

\* Hikmat Hajiyev: Armenia's illegal settlement policy across Azerbaijan's occupied territories is a military crime. Azertag.az, 12 September 2020. Available at: <https://azertag.az/en/xeber/1582895>

\* Ibid

\* President: I have a negative assessment of the current state of negotiations and I think the Azerbaijani people fully agree with me. Azertag.az, 19 September 2020. Available at: [https://azertag.az/en/xeber/President\\_I\\_have\\_a\\_negative\\_assessment\\_of\\_the\\_current\\_state\\_of\\_negotiations\\_and\\_I\\_think\\_the\\_Azerbaijani\\_people\\_fully\\_agree\\_with\\_me-1589697](https://azertag.az/en/xeber/President_I_have_a_negative_assessment_of_the_current_state_of_negotiations_and_I_think_the_Azerbaijani_people_fully_agree_with_me-1589697)

\* FM Bayramov receives French Ambassador to Azerbaijan. Azvision.az, 15 September 2020. Available at: <https://en.azvision.az/news/130735/fm-bayramov-receives-french-ambassador-to-azerbaijan.html>

\* Johanna Popjanevski. International law and Nagorno-Karabakh conflict. In: Cornell S. (eds) The International Politics of the Armenian-Azerbaijani Conflict. 2017, Palgrave Macmillan, New York, p. 44.



# REFLECTIONS ON RISING TO THE CHALLENGE OF THE PANDEMIC

Many people ask me “where do we stand on getting a vaccine to fight the COVID-19 pandemic?” My reply is that there are many facets to the needed response, beyond just the treatment or the vaccine, all working together. Here is a brief summary of the most important of these facets...

**First: Diagnostics:** In order to be able to identify the extent, location and spread of the pandemic, we absolutely need to develop robust, inexpensive, effective, efficient, fast (preferably immediate) tests that are accurate (control of both false positives and false negatives).

And we also need to develop effective new technologies for tracking and tracing, so that based on these robust tests we are able to identify the early onset of the infection and take action to isolate those in danger and those who could infect others. And, these technologies should also lead to real-time mapping of the spread of the viral infections, which we have seen can move with enormous speed. The second important facet for a solid response is, in my view: Therapeutics.

**Second: Therapeutics:** At present, we have two medicines that seem to work: Remdesivir (an anti-viral) and Dexamethasone, (a type of cortico-steroid medication). Research to identify additional therapeutics is underway in many locations. Monoclonal antibodies appear promising. With additional therapeutics and improved clinical knowledge of the disease, its side-effects, i.e. its effects or impacts on other organs beyond its impact on the respiratory system, the ramifications of such impacts and its lasting effects (even after recovery), we will be able to treat COVID-19, reduce the number of deaths and improve the conditions of treating the sick. Therapeutics are very important. In some cases, such as HIV/AIDS, we rely on therapeutics to limit the damage of the disease, as we do not have a vaccine to deal with it.

**Third: Vaccines:** There are many parallel efforts being pursued by many research centers, pharmaceutical companies and governments, using different approaches. In total, there are about 25 promising candidate vaccines around the world. At present (July 2020) four of these are quite advanced and their results so far seem promising.

Two of the teams one in China (CanSino Biologics in Tianjin, China) and the other in the UK (the University of Oxford, UK, in collaboration with AstraZeneca) are developing ‘viral vector’ vaccines. The other two are in Germany (BioNTech in Mainz, Germany, with drug company Pfizer) and the USA (Moderna biotech of Cambridge, Mass with the US National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases (NIAID) in Bethesda, Maryland), and they are working on targeting the spike protein and are developing RNA-based vaccines.

All these vaccines seem capable of producing the kind of immune responses that could induce protection against Coronavirus. However, we are still only in the early phases of the work, and though the results are promising, it is still far too early to reach any final conclusions.

Furthermore, commercial companies are willing to gamble on “pre-producing” some of these vaccines in parallel with the final testing, so that should it be approved, they will have hundreds of millions of doses ready to go. Governments are willing to pay for this. Indeed, the US government just signed an agreement with Sanofi and GlaxoSmithKline to purchase more than 100 million doses of their vaccine as soon as it is approved and ready. In addition, just now, Russia announced that, within the next two weeks, it would be deploying a vaccine to front-line workers in parallel with its third-phase clinical trials.

But beyond the scientific work and the commercial production work, it will be a gigantic task to actually immunize the billions of people who need to receive it if we are to ultimately eliminate the danger of this Coronavirus.

**Fourth: A Clearing House for all the Studies, Observations and Information.** The internet has achieved miracles. We learn immediately about all the scientific developments. It also allows all scientists and all people around the world to be in instantaneous contact. Distance learning and work from home have become realities, as has on-line shopping. Social media puts us all at the click of a mouse and the flight of an electron from each other. Social media, sometimes spreads rumors and false information, but on the whole the internet is one of the most profound blessings of this era.

There is so much information that is pouring out from so many sources around the world, that I believe that new systems of curating that data and analyzing it, using the latest techniques of ICT, AI, and Big data analytics will be required. This will necessitate the collaboration of all the scientific sources around the world so that the communication of results, and the discussion of the best approaches can take place using data from all over the world. In my view, the WHO is the natural candidate to do this, alongside the elite public health institutions of the world, such as the CDC in the USA, despite its recent unimpressive performance. Most importantly, though, is the importance of preparing the existing health systems.

**Fifth: Preparation of the Local, Regional and National Health Systems.** There is a need for adequate preparation of the health facilities, equipment and trained personnel so that they do not get overwhelmed by a surge in the number of cases. Buffer stocks and resilient rapidly activated procurement systems must be available, and tested regularly.

In addition, standard government policies to respond to different types of emergencies are needed, and “Playbooks” to cope with emerging threats under different scenarios must be considered part of the preparation of the nation to cope with national emergencies. Ideally, the executive branch should not only develop such scenarios, they should also discuss these with special committees of parliaments.

Beyond all of the above, it is the individual human behavior of the population that is vitally important in ensuring the effectiveness of this multi-faceted response to this unprecedented dangerous world-wide pandemic.

**Sixth: Insistence on the Basic Behavioral Requirements Everywhere.** For all people a number of simple actions have now emerged as essential:

- Wearing a mask
- Social distancing
- Washing our hands
- Limiting numbers of people meeting in a given location
- Meeting outdoors rather than indoors

Proper education of the public about the importance of these individual actions is crucial. If these actions are coupled with systems for returning to work, controlled reopening of economic activities and schooling of children, and local, regional and national governments are actively using monitoring based on the best ICT and the best diagnostics, then the curves will not only be flattened, they can be largely crushed. Some East Asian countries and New Zealand have shown that it can be done.



# CHINA, UNITED STATES AND EUROPE AT THE TIME OF COVID-19

In the recent months, characterized by the unprecedented spread of the Covid-19 pandemic, tensions that already certainly existed - but with different characteristics - between the United States and China on the one hand, and between China and other countries on the other, have been heightened. In this optics, special reference is to be made to the attention and often to the pressures that the People's Republic of China is exerting or has intended to exert especially from the point of view of cooperation and presence in the economy, and truly in very sensitive sectors of the economy.

In the first case, it is certain that the crisis due to Covid-19 is a global crisis in all respects, and therefore the tensions that already existed between the United States and China with regard to trade policy, the attitudes of particular rigour of the United States towards China with specific reference to the export of Chinese products and the accusation of an imbalance - an imbalance between exports and imports: all these tensions cannot but consolidate and integrate, in my opinion, with other aspects that have more specifically geo-strategic and geo-political dimensions.

It is clear that President Trump's many repeated accusations about China's lack of transparency about the origin of the virus from Wuhan's laboratories is one of the aspects, but it makes it clear that China is somehow in the crosshairs of the United States, not only because of its enormous ability to enter markets in many countries around the world, with great prominence and great power, but also because China is no longer only an economic giant, - as it has appeared for decades; today, on the chessboard of the Far East and the Pacific, China plays a geo-political role with regard to tense relations with some countries in the region, or for the great increase and "exhibition" of military spending, also for the Chinese warship. Well, all this worries the United States, not excluding the role that China has always played in relations with North Korea, which Trump hoped to be able to manage almost exclusively.

In all this, China has moved with great skill, as it is known, but also with extreme unscrupulousness, using the multibillion-dollar project of the new Silk Road not as a purely economic initiative but as a global project of high geo-strategic and geo-political value, to get in touch and get in direct contact with the economies of many Western and Asian countries. And among the Western countries, among the last which joined the project we find Italy, which has already benefited and could benefit from major Chinese investments. Think once and for all about connectivity, port hubs, big infrastructure.

Chinese activism also affects areas of extreme strategic interest: 5G technology, the increasingly intrusive presence of Huawei, which has also forced us to take urgent measures of guarantee and protection, with an increase in the powers of the State relating to filter and ban on possible penetration in very sensitive areas such as communication infrastructure. All this has been accompanied by continuous signals on the American side towards the Western Allies, and often towards Italy, to be wary, to be cautious, to tout court reject Chinese offers, and this is a piece of the great picture that certainly the epidemic of Covid-19 does not reduce but, if anything, makes more articulate.

It is said - and I am convinced - that China has interests even where it seems to want to do you some favour; well, China's usual cunning and negotiating ability has meant that China has accompanied these measures with important actions that, taking the opportunity of the pandemic, have shown solidarity with countries in the West that have been severely affected by the crisis, including Italy, by sending some aid; otherwise (in truth much greater in quantity) China sent supplies regularly paid by the Italian Government. However, with its behaviour, it gave the attention and impression that at a difficult time China showed friendship to Italy.

This has led to an American reaction that also had necessarily to be on the level of aid and solidarity, during the acute phase of the crisis that has hit Italy: American aid, investments were provided, as if to say "Do not trust China, because China has other interests behind this gesture of apparent solidarity. We Americans are your friends."

Italy obviously knows and needs to know where to stand. The United States of America is the pillar of the historic and decades-old Atlantic Alliance, in which we recognize each other. But Italy has partners, not comparable in terms of intensity and similarity of positions with respect to the United States, and among them there is certainly China, with which we have economic relations; these are less intense but significant geo-political relations, but there is no need to say that we must always take into account that at the first place as pillars of the Italian foreign policy we find Europe and the Atlantic Alliance, not anything else.

Chinese pressure, action and positive Chinese communication have broken through Europe. Certainly the Europeans have accepted some Chinese initiatives, but they have been able - at the right time - to clearly express their position to the Chinese partner, in the sense of the call for an independent international investigation under the auspices of the World Health Organization, able to shed light on the many dark points about the origin of the virus.

I do not point the finger, not knowing acts and facts, on the Chinese Government; in any case, I think it is very clear that the origin is there, and that some Chinese practices such as the horrible practice of outdoor markets where millions and millions of animals - from dogs to cats to bats - are horribly tortured in indecent hygienic conditions, was one of the possible causes of the spread of this virus. Therefore it is not by chance that they talk about the bats as a possible cause of the spreading of this virus, and I hope that they will be still found on the open-air markets of Chinese cities only for a short time.

This independent investigation is not an indictment, it is a call for transparency and truth, and I frankly hope that the Italian Government will adhere to this European position contrary to the reluctance I have seen in recent weeks. It would be a mistake: Italy is not abdicating its partnership with China, if it asks China first of all to cease these horrific practices on millions and millions of animals in absolutely anti-hygienic conditions as a possible contribution to remove one of the conceivable factors of the onset of the virus.

As for the near future, it is clear that the post Covid-19 will require cooperation between all the countries of the world, a cooperation to which Europe must participate united, and not with internal divisions between its member countries; this international cooperation will serve to revive the plight of billions of human beings in the world.

And I would like to add, therefore, that - although the American election campaign climate makes me not particularly optimistic - I very much hope that even between the United States and China minimum conditions of cooperation will be recreated - starting with a rapid agreement on tariffs - being certain that China, as much as America and as much as Europe, has been deeply damaged by the Covid-19 pandemic, and therefore there is an interest in avoiding further conflicts in the future, further crises, which, among other things, would end up encouraging the destabilization of other areas of the world where certainly the Americans, but also the Chinese, have a very strong interest. I am referring, for example, to the African continent, where China is showing great pressure and great presence, and the United States risk losing a lever and initiative that is absolutely dating back to old time.

For all these reasons, I believe that the post-Covid-19 future should show concrete commitments that require enlightened political leadership, vision, and that they do not make the mistake of thinking that "if I give the further blow to a partner in difficulty maybe I earn something". We would all lose, and this is a message that applies to the Chinese and the Americans, but it applies first and foremost to us Europeans: only by remaining united, with a European response to the crisis in terms of solidarity and revitalization, we - as the EU - can demonstrate that we can be one of the actors who will play a role in the reconstruction of a world affected by this pandemic.



# The Better Societies for Tomorrow: Health, Education, Freedom, Participation and Reducing Inequalities

What constitutes a better society? Opinions and perspectives vary according to views and backgrounds. Health, education and the freedom of expressing one's opinions are all vital components that contribute to a healthier and safer environment.

A few days ago, I was intrigued by a short episode I read. When the American cultural anthropologist, Margaret Mead was asked what she considered to be the first sign of civilization, her reply surprised the audience. She stated that for her it was the discovery of a thighbone, that had been broken and healed, as it was evidence that someone has taken the time to care for the person to recover.

Society is at its best when its members serve others, when we are there for each other and ultimately when we are concerned and feel responsible towards the most vulnerable in our society.

More than a quarter of all children in the EU are at risk of poverty or social exclusion. As research shows, poverty and social exclusion becomes intergenerational if not addressed. Children who, therefore are in poverty or at risk can never reach their full potential. Children are tomorrow's adults and leaders.

Societies who do not invest in children can never maximise on their potential prosperity and wellbeing!

Children between the ages of 0-14, constitute a global population of 1.9 billion. Addressing Child Poverty is a big challenge but it also presents a tremendous opportunity when one considers that they are not only our present but also that our shared future depends on their skills, abilities and values.

Speaking from my very own experience with children, it is easily seen that children are creative, innovative and inspiring.

The question remains however, are we providing the right facilities and the effective accessibility to the empowerment of our children? Children have hopes, dreams and aspirations. They are the experts on the way they want to live their lives and on how they want their communities, countries and world to be.

Equipping our children with the proper tools is not only the right thing to do, but it is the smart and necessary thing to do.

In 2015 the European Parliament called for the setting up of a child guarantee that would help ensure that every child in EU Member States, at risk of poverty or social exclusion, would have access to: free healthcare, free education, free early childhood education and care, decent housing and adequate nutrition. Five years on children living in Europe are still waiting for their governments to act.

I must mention however, there has never been as much visibility given to children by the European Commission, as now, thanks to President Ursula von der Leyen. Never before have we had a Vice-President of the EU Commission that has been entrusted with the development of a Children's Strategy, while Commissioner Nicholas Schmit was entrusted with the development of a Child Guarantee. It is now up to the EU Council, i.e. to the Heads of State and Governments to champion this important initiative to address not only the present

problem of child poverty in the European Union, but also to ensure that the necessary resilience in our communities and societies, is sowed so as to reap the necessary important outcomes for future prosperity and wellbeing in Europe.

The Child Guarantee was developed through an important collaborative platform comprising of Applica and the Luxembourg Institute of Socio-Economic Research (LISER), in close collaboration with Eurochild and Save the Children, with the support of thematic experts and national experts. The child guarantee feasibility study was published in June 2020.

Child Participation is essential and fundamental to ensure that children's aspirations and needs are met. Child Participation is a child's right as established by the most widely ratified UN Convention on the Rights of the Child (1990). Children tend to view reality from a different perspective and is an enriching experience to any adult, however, many a time we, as adults, tend to undermine the opinions of children, when in actual fact, they themselves can present feasible solutions to many of the challenges they face.

Empowering our children with the right tools, abilities and skills, means that effective access to inclusive education is essential. More than 260 million children worldwide, do not go to school 6 in 10 children are not reaching the minimal proficiency level for reading and mathematics. We are much far off the targets established by the SDGs for 2030. The pandemic unfortunately has continued to exacerbate the situation. Children with no effective access to a good education would never manage to build a prosperous future.

Child abuse and violence, unfortunately in today's so called modern era, is still a reality. Globally, it is estimated that up to 1 billion children aged 2-17 years, have experienced physical, sexual, or emotional violence or neglect which ultimately reduces their sense of self-worth, affront their dignity and hinder their development. It unfortunately, gets even worse ... Every seven minutes an adolescent boy or girl is killed by an act of violence. In 2015 alone, violence took the lives of around 82,000 adolescents worldwide.

While children and adolescents may experience violence, being a girl presents more risks and vulnerabilities. In fact, every 10 minutes, somewhere in the world, an adolescent girl dies as a result of violence. 650 million girls alive today were married before the age of 18 and approximately 15 million adolescent girls, aged 15 to 19 worldwide have experienced forced sexual abuse at some point in their life. The protection of children from all forms of violence is a child's right as guaranteed by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Violence, however remains so real for too many children around the globe.

Children's Rights should be our guidelines to better societies for tomorrow.

Child Participation is essential for the much needed successful outcomes, to better societies. Children's voices matter and are essential for the prosperity and the wellbeing of our societies.

Working together and collaborating is key, as Carol Bellamy, the American non-profit executive and former politician, so well illustrates '... Together let us build the

global alliance to realise that goal, secure in the knowledge that in serving the best interests of children, we serve the best interests of all humanity.'

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**Marie-Louise Coleiro Preca**  
Former President of Malta





Web-Conference  
1 October 2020

### Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict



**MODERATOR:**  
**ROBERT CEKUTA**  
United States Ambassador to the Republic of Azerbaijan 2015-2018



**ELNUR ALIYEV**  
CEO, NGIC



**EKA TKESHELASHVILI**  
Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia 2010-2012



**RICHARD E. HOAGLAND**  
Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary in State's Bureau of South and Central Asia Affairs 2013-2015; Interim U.S. Co-Chair of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe's Minsk Group for Nagorno-Karabakh



**HIKMET CETIN**  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Turkey 1991-1994



**JOHN ORDWAY**  
United States Ambassador to Armenia 2001-2004



**MLADEN IVANIC**  
Member of the Presidency of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2014-2018



**SUSAN ELLIOTT**  
President and CEO, National Committee on American Foreign Policy



**IVO JOSIPOVIC**  
President of Croatia 2010-2015



**ROVSHAN MURADOV**  
Secretary General, NGIC



**VALDIS ZATLERS**  
President of Latvia 2007-2011



**ZLATKO LAGIMDŽIJA**  
Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina 2001-2002



**FARIZ ISMAILZADA**  
Executive Vice Rector, ADA University

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Web-Conference  
6 October 2020

### "International Organisations: International Law During Crisis"



**Moderator:**  
**Eka Tkeshelashvili**  
Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia 2010-2012



**Elnur Aliyev**  
CEO of NGIC



**Abdulaziz Altwajiri**  
former Director General of ISESCO



**Maria Fernanda Espinosa**  
President of the UNGA 2018-2019;  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Ecuador 2007, 2017-2018



**Ekmeleddin Ihsanoglu**  
Secretary-General of the Organization of Islamic Cooperation 2004-2014;  
Member of the Grand National Assembly of Turkey 2013-2018



**Fariz Ismailzade**  
Vice-Rector, ADA University



**Amre Moussa**  
Secretary-General of the Arab League 2001-2011;  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt 1991-2001 (TBC)



**Rovshan Muradov**  
Secretary General, NGIC

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Web-Conference

16 October 2020

"Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Failed Ceasefire & the Role of Third Parties"



**Moderator:**  
**Eka Tkeshelashvili**  
*Deputy Prime Minister of Georgia  
2010-2012*



**Vaira Vike-Freiberga**  
*President of Latvia 1999-2007  
Secretary-General of the Asb League  
Co-Chair, NGIC*



**Amre Moussa**  
*Secretary-General of the Arab League  
2001-2011;  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Egypt  
1991-2001*



**Ismail Serageldin**  
*Co-Chair, NGIC*



**Susan Elliott**  
*President and CEO, National  
Committee on American Foreign  
Policy*



**Yasar Yakis**  
*Minister of Foreign Affairs of  
Turkey 2002-2003*



**Zlatko Lagumdzija**  
*Prime Minister of Bosnia &  
Herzegovina 2001 - 2002  
Minister of Foreign Affairs of  
Bosnia & Herzegovina 2012 - 2015*



**Dmitri Trenin**  
*Director, Carnegie Moscow Center*



**Valdis Zatlers**  
*President of Latvia 2007-2011*



**Rosen Plevneliev**  
*President of Bulgaria 2012-2017*



**Yves Leterme**  
*Prime Minister of Belgium  
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Web-Conference

23 October 2020

"Nagorno-Karabakh Conflict: Role of Third Parties - presence of USA and EU"



**Moderator:**  
**Zlatko Lagumdzija**  
*Prime Minister of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
2001-2002*



**Boris Tadic**  
*President of Serbia 2004-2012*



**Aleksander Kwasniewski**  
*President of Poland 1995-2005*



**Susan Elliott**  
*CEO and President National  
Committee on American  
Foreign Policy*



**David Merkel**  
*Former Deputy Assistant Secretary of  
State for European and Eurasian  
Affairs at the US Department of State*



**Mladen Ivanic**  
*Member of the Presidency  
of Bosnia and Herzegovina  
2014-2018*



**Fariz Ismailzade**  
*Vice-Rector, ADA University*



**Robert Cekuta**  
*former Ambassador of USA to  
Azerbaijan*



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*Senior Foreign Affairs Correspondent,  
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**Rovshan Muradov**  
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# LEADERSHIP CHALLENGES IN POST-COVID-19 RECOVERY

## The historic crisis

With COVID-19, the world has never experienced so universal, deep and dramatic a cliff-edge drop in human well-being. As the month of August 2020 approaches, we are about to exceed the 17 million case-load mark, with over 750,000 deaths, up more than ten-fold in the last three months alone. The American CDC (Centers for Disease Control & Prevention) estimates that the true incidence of cases there might be up to 13 times higher. Some leaders, as in Iran, estimate the true case-load may be a hundred times higher. If we include “excess deaths” and CDC estimates, millions may have already died from this, making it the worst human health problem at this time. *Millions more will die before we can truly speak of a post-COVID world.*

The IMF warned that global GDP will fall by about 5% this year, hoping for a rebound in 2021, but remaining 7% below pre-pandemic estimates. The OECD had an even gloomier forecast of a 6% fall, predicated on avoiding a second wave – but many countries are experiencing the second wave not in winter but already in midsummer, and WHO now says, on a global basis, it is one big escalating wave. And global GDP has already dropped by 10% in the second quarter/year-on-year. Several western economies are now looking at double-digit declines in GDP. While most economies will fall into recession if they have not already done so, China may post growth of about 1% this year, due its early recovery – but India’s economy will shrink by at least 5%, and some Latin American economies, such as Mexico and Brazil, may contract by around 10% or more. African estimates of a 2% decline may be too optimistic.

Globally, job losses are in the region of 400 million, up from the 25 million just three months ago, says the ILO. That is a 14% drop in global working hours, for a 48-hour working week. Add about another 2 billion people in the informal sector whose livelihoods have declined substantially, with great life-threatening impoverishment. At the same time, 1.8 billion people are vulnerable to climate change, and 2.7 billion live below the poverty line in 132 countries. A minimum basic income is needed. The UN Conference on Trade and Development fears that FDI will fall by 30 to 40%. In late March, the IMF observed that already \$83 billion had been removed by investors from developing countries since COVID struck – the largest loss on record, comparable to the economic rape of the worst excesses of colonialism, and contrasted ironically by a figure matched by the EU’s new grant to Italy.

COVID-19 is therefore “*uprooting economic globalization*”. Global production networks are suffering the greatest disruption ever. It has exposed how globally interconnected production and trade in goods & services have become, as countries are now searching to increase resilience by reducing these dependencies, adding to the disruption of global supply chains. Severe contractions are emerging in tourism, catering, airlines, and other services. Commerce is moving increasingly online, to the detriment of the street retail sector dependent on sharply reduced footfall. And dense urbanization is losing its appeal in the new age of social distancing.

The impact is not just economic, but social, and indeed civilizational, as human behaviour and interpersonal trust, let alone intimacy, have taken a brutal and systemic shock. The assumptions of recent years about tectonic shifts in geo-politics and economics have been overturned by massive uncertainties, growing distrust in multilateral cooperation, and abrasive international rivalries that risk at any moment switching from hostility to outright conflict. Covert hybrid warfare, leaked into digital, financial, and industrial relations, has now become commonplace, using and exploiting the obscure networks and assets of organized crime.

The dramatic falls in national taxation revenue from the cutbacks in economic activity across the world – at a time of enormous fiscal stimulus for safety nets – will deeply affect the future ability of governments to sustain service delivery, potentially undermining post-COVID19 recovery efforts. This trend is weakening the role of government further, but can a remedy can be found in fiscal recovery? Where is there light in this tunnel?

## Towards remedy

I would like to suggest four simple ideas:

1. *Spend your way out*
2. *Borrow smartly*
3. *Go Green*
4. *Save the planet*

Firstly, **spend your way out!** We need considerable increases in fiscal stimulus and public spending, both for direct response to COVID-19, including boosting and reforming public health services, surge capacities, preventive PPE production and stockpiles, and for livelihood support, including for example, through some kind of universal basic income or labour-intensive public works, e.g. for environmental remediation, but also for longer-term recovery. Governments should not be shy to sustain investments in health, boost SMEs, and avoid taxation increases. Deflationary spending cuts should be avoided in any fiscal adjustment, and inequality should be reduced, bringing down the GINI coefficient. Boosting public expenditure will strengthen the economic role of the State, but should not induce mass surveillance.

Secondly, **borrow smartly!** Those countries that can should deploy their borrowing capacity, preferably in a regional mutualised way as the EU-27 have just done. Steering the fiscal stimulus measures for post-COVID recovery in this direction is a no-brainer: we are blessed that real interest rates have never been quite so low. For the advanced economies this has been a 30+ years decline, a long-term trend since the early 1980s. With interest rates on government debt kept low, it enables governments to borrow, as long as the risk premium is low. Once-off recovery spending is less likely to cause international investors to raise the risk premium, if this is not a longterm trend increase in public expenditure. If interest rates, as a % of tax can be kept lower than debt as % of GDP, then so much the better. For poorer countries, debt forgiveness or at least re-scheduling must be an option.

Thirdly, **go green!** The impact of prolonged lockdowns on productivity, energy consumption, and pollution, has led to major reductions in all of these, and represents a golden opportunity to “go green”. Global decarbonization by 2050 suddenly seems attainable. Governments worldwide can shift electricity generation from fossil fuels to renewables. The costs of converting to renewable energies are now totally



affordable, making de-carbonization financially and environmentally attractive. In many cases, grid parity is achieved, i.e. the costs are equalized, whether fuels are fossil or renewable. Although with COVID oil prices have plummeted, this is no argument to delay reversing the human impact on climate change. Jeff Sachs estimates that substantial de-carbonization, e.g. over 80% by 2050, would cost 1% of global GDP or less.

Fourthly: save the planet! Achieve the SDGs: we had a pre-COVID financing gap of US\$ 2.5 trillion for the coming decade, to achieve the SDGs and save the environment. That price tag sounded enormous, but was affordable in retrospect, when you consider that global GDP was about US\$ 88 trillion in 2019 (WB) alone (or ten times more for the decade), so we were talking about spending 2.8% of our annual global wealth to save humanity. Compare that small amount of US\$2.5 trillion to the COVID responses in fiscal stimulus amounting to US\$ 11 trillion, before the recent EU package added another \$2 trillion (US\$ 1.3T/€1.1T for MFF/7 years and a one-off NGEU fund of €750B).

But, the 17 sustainable development goals to be achieved by 2030 also include human rights issues, fundamental freedoms, political participation issues, accountable institutional building, and capacity-building. The targets for SDG number 16 - Peace, Justice, and Strong Institutions are particularly important for civic education, human rights, and good governance. This is where the opportunity to reverse democratic erosion comes in, including in developing countries, as we can, most of all, afford to sustain and expand ODA beyond the donor target of 0.7% of GDP.

### The leadership challenge

Good leadership is marked by the highest ethical standards; a strong sense of duty and responsibility for others; a strategic vision that mobilizes energies constructively; and is inclusive, inspires trust and confidence, and demonstrates transparency and integrity.

To this end, a thriving civil society, a diverse and independent media, and an independent judiciary are key. Active citizen and media engagement in this are essential: to hold power, public and private, accountable to standards of integrity and transparency, to defend human rights,

and to eliminate and prevent “state capture”, and “regulatory capture” by vested political, corporate and organized criminal interests. But market concentration is a threat to democracy. Leaders must follow through on their government’s obligations as states parties to the UN Convention Against Corruption, against the nefarious influence of organized crime and corruption within government and the economy.

Global corporations must also be held to standards ethics, good governance, human rights, gender equality, environmental stewardship, social responsibility, and enforceable public accountability. Only by working together can leaders, their countries, societies, and corporations, succeed in addressing global problems.

Multilateralism also needs robust strengthening to prevent conflict and to keep military and security expenditures down. But countries have been starving the UN system and multilateral institutions of resources. Instead, the UN needs resources fit-for-purpose, and enabling greater efficiencies. But it also needs a correction to the democratic dysfunction that sees a UN Security Council coterie of veto-wielding powers “lay down the law”, whilst the larger UN General Assembly’s resolutions have no such force. The UNSC needs reform, but the relationship between the UNSC and the UNGA also needs an overhaul. General Assembly resolutions that reflect some kind of super-majority of states and populations must have more compelling legitimacy, and instruments of enforcement. And no single country should be able to wield a veto, neither in the UNSC nor in the UNGA. In that way, UNSC resolutions would also gain more force.

The morality, integrity, intelligence, and wisdom of the world’s leaders has never been so important since the foundation of the United Nations 75 years ago. But apex power must be transparent and held accountable, democratically. Given the rapid acceleration of change globally, whether environmental, digital, technological, economic or social, global institutions and national governments worldwide need to act faster and more effectively to rapidly implement their international commitments and obligations arising out of global treaties. It’s no good waiting 5 or 10 years before implementing an agenda that was ratified so long before. One example: climate change; another, fighting corruption, and the unhealthy grip of vested interests, and of course pandemic prevention. Post-COVID-19 recovery adds dramatic urgency to all of these imperatives, most of which already have existed before.

**AMB. FRANCIS M. O’DONNELL**



## Global Partnerships for an African Recovery

The spread of the COVID-19 pandemic has profoundly affected developed and developing countries alike, despite vast disparities in initial response capacities. Global leaders were especially **concerned** about the disease's potential implications for Africa, given the continent's lack of financial and medical resources, weak health-care systems, fragile economies, and vulnerable populations.

But preparation and cooperation among African leaders and African Union agencies, particularly the Africa Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, have resulted in many **successes**—including increased testing capacity, resource mobilization, and coordinated policies to prevent and contain the coronavirus's spread and promote economic recovery.

Despite these successes, Africa is still facing significant **challenges**. These include a continued rise in COVID-19 cases, a need for greater testing capacity and improved health infrastructure, difficulties acquiring medical and food supplies, weak social-welfare systems that are struggling to support vulnerable populations during the economic crisis, and high government debt coupled with a need for increased spending.

Although African countries are capable of continuing their progress on the long road to recovery, external support would greatly bolster their efforts. Aside from humanitarian principles and solidarity, a strong and rapid African recovery is in the world's interest. As long as the virus is unchecked in some regions, no part of the world can be safe from it. Moreover, if COVID-19 further weakens fragile African states or causes health or economic disasters on the continent, a migration crisis or increased threats to international security could ensue.

We therefore propose six ways the world can cooperate with Africa to improve the continent's crisis response, accelerate its economic recovery, and build momentum for its post-pandemic development.

### Although African countries are capable of continuing their progress on the long road to recovery, external support would greatly bolster their efforts.

First, external partners can provide sufficient resources and investment to enable effective COVID-19 responses and inclusive post-pandemic economic recoveries. Although multilateral and bilateral partners have already provided some **financial support** in the form of debt relief, loans, and grants, African governments need much more. Some estimate the continent's pandemic-response funding gap at about **\$100 billion annually over the next three years**. Given Africa's health-care and economic vulnerabilities, additional financial support and debt relief are critical.

Second, partners should support and invest in the African Continental Free Trade Area, which is one of Africa's best economic-recovery plans. The AfCFTA aims to increase intra-African trade significantly, and thus **develop** regional value chains, local manufacturing, and sourcing of intermediate and final goods. By reducing the continent's vulnerability to external shocks through decreased dependence on non-African trade, the agreement will foster economic diversification and resilience, thereby promoting Africa's integration and assisting its recovery. In addition to backing and investing in the AfCFTA, partners can provide expertise regarding trade regulations and manufacturing capacity.

Supporting private-sector growth is a third way to unlock Africa's economic potential, representing a significant opportunity—in terms of both trade and investment—that will benefit Africa and global businesses. Although both the **formal sector** and the large **informal sector** are currently struggling, owing to lockdowns and economic restrictions, private firms will be crucial to Africa's recovery and future development. External partners can support African businesses through increased investment, including in small and medium-size enterprises that are today trying to stay afloat and pay their employees. International partners can also help to improve the business environment, for example by overseeing a **mandatory regulation process**.

Next, external partners can support Africa's efforts to embrace the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) and achieve a successful digital transformation. During the pandemic, technology has enabled real-time medical forecasting and modeling, better communication between leaders, and the virtual operation of businesses. But Africa's technology infrastructure, specifically **internet access**, lags severely, and the continent has benefited less from digital technology than the rest of the world. Partners can help accelerate the 4IR in Africa by sharing technological innovations, collaborating in adapting them to African contexts, and providing investments that will unleash young African innovators' technological potential and enable existing innovations to be scaled up.

Fifth, the world can help to ensure that no African is left behind, including through job creation, skill-building, social protection, and gender equality. Vulnerable groups such as those living in **urban slums** or rural areas, youth, **women**, and the **poorest families** need extra government support, but social-welfare systems are weak, especially in fragile states. External partners should therefore give special consideration to assisting the most-affected countries and communities by channeling resources toward these populations, instead of giving unconditional aid to governments, and by collaborating with African leaders to create innovative policies that benefit these groups.

The final priority is to help Africa address its fragilities and bridge the gaps between policy goals and outcomes, including through evidence-based policy research. Ineffective institutions, corruption, and a lack of accountability can undermine even perfect policies. Partners can monitor projects or provide experts to assist in implementation, and can promote good governance through measures and indicators such as Transparency International's **Corruption Perceptions Index**, the Fund for Peace's **Fragile States Index**, or the World Bank's **Worldwide Governance Indicators**. Research institutes and think tanks such as the **Brookings Institution** are playing an important role in this effort.

Each of these six proposals can help Africa to combat and recover from the COVID-19 pandemic, but they are also critical for **realizing the continent's potential** and accelerating its future development. By collaborating with external partners to secure additional resources, develop new initiatives, and invest in key sectors, African countries can mitigate the virus's immediate impact and hasten economic recovery while building resilient systems for long-term growth and success.



## Rural Economies Must be Built As Independent Economies

Economists always imagined urban economy as the engine of the economy. Rural economy was assigned the role of supplier of labour and agricultural inputs.

It may had justification in the past given the lack of basic infrastructure in the rural areas. But not any more. Although the world has changed, the urban-rural relationship has remained unchanged. Today's rural areas are endowed with the same basic infrastructure as the urban centres. There is no reason to keep the rural economy as an appendix to urban economy, no reason to send their labour as migrant labour to find livelihoods in the urban centres. If right institutions are built and right policies are adopted they can find their survival livelihoods around their home. Rural economy must be built as parallel economy, an independent economy to open up opportunities for its own human and natural resources.

### Informal Sector or Micro Entrepreneur Sector

Corona crisis revealed many weaknesses of Indian economy — for example, helplessness of the people in the so-called 'informal sector'. They constitute majority of the work force of India. We saw how income of the daily income earners suddenly disappeared, how millions of migrant workers had no options but to head for home thousand miles away, on foot.

Economic theory in its broad and impatient brush created a sector called 'informal sector' as a catch-all sector for those who could not yet enter the formal sector. It was a convenient way for the theory to keep these people out of their theoretical sight, and move on with the exciting sector they call 'formal sector'. Economic theory treats informal sector as a waiting room before getting entry into world of economic activities — the formal sector. They argue that the bigger the population in the waiting room the less is the capacity of the economy, because the informal sector doesn't add any capacity to the economy.

Job comes as the ticket to allow an individual from informal sector to enter into the formal world, or the economic world. Economists feel their only obligation to informal sector is to create jobs. Since jobs are in the urban centres they found it justified to remain busy with urban economy. That made informal sector and rural economy largely forgotten part of economics.

Working for creating Grameen Bank gave me the realization that economic theory interpreted the situation in a completely wrong way. I saw the informal sector as the power house of the economy. I felt terribly unhappy that because of gross mis-conceptualization by theoreticians, so much human creativity gets wasted every moment.

This mis-conceptualization is clearly reflected in the dismissive name they came up with for this sector, the 'informal sector'. Another strange name they use for this sector is 'unorganized sector'. It appears funny to me because economists, in the first place, refuse to make any effort to organize it, then put the blame on it by calling it an 'unorganized sector'.

We can divide the sector in two parts, a) one part consisting of wage earners who sell their labour for a living, with traditional verbal contracts, and b) the second part is made up with people making a living by petty trading, or producing various products such as, handicrafts, household products, and equipments, or by offering services.

I strongly felt that appropriate name for this sector should be 'Micro Entrepreneur Sector', to reflect what happens inside this sector and to recognize its entrepreneurial potentials. I see this sector as the creative hub of the economy. It thrives with natural energy of human beings. It is the seed-bed of people's natural entrepreneurship. Many of the people in this sector are making a living by informal wage jobs, primarily because they could not find money to start a micro business.

Since economists abandoned the informal sector, micro entrepreneurs remained deprived from the attention of the policy-makers, political leaders, legislators, and academics. On the other hand, with supports from academic and political sides, the labour in the formal sector continued to attract attention of the governments around the world, which led to establishing Ministry of Labour in every government. In the process labour got dedicated institutions for itself, and achieved many legal and political rights. In India, after many campaigns and struggles some micro entrepreneurs got recognition as formal labour by claiming themselves to be 'self-employed labour'. Unfortunately it needed them to mis-categorise themselves as 'labour', to have access to some rights.

Covid-19 revealed in a massive way how vulnerable the micro entrepreneurs are in an economy like that of India. It made it very urgent that the entire theoretical framework be reviewed and corrected by recognizing the 'micro entrepreneur sector' and bringing all the legal, political, social and financial support for this sector. This sector should be recognized as the massive base of the national entrepreneurship pyramid which ranges from multi-billion dollar entrepreneurs at the peak, and multi-hundred dollar micro entrepreneurs at the bottom. Viewing them as the base of the entrepreneurship pyramid of the country it is easy to recognize them as the most important emerging economic force, rather than a burden on the society. Then policy goals become easy to visualize. These policy goals would be to support the micro entrepreneurs to achieve entrepreneurial successes by creating financial, legal, and support institutions dedicated to addressing their needs and problems.

Government can start with providing legal support. Existing rules and procedures on how to register businesses, how to operate them within the limits of legal boundaries, how to interact with the government agencies, how to interact with tax authorities, etc, are all created by keeping large or medium size businesses in mind. If micro entrepreneurs are asked to comply with all these laws and regulations they'll be in a big crisis. These are way above their heads. They'll have no other way but to go underground, or give up their businesses and show up in the employment lines for their survival.

To avoid such a situation government may take a general decision that no existing laws and regulations will apply to micro entrepreneurs, government will make separate set of laws and regulations specifically for micro entrepreneurs. To start the process government may start with making laws and regulations to support micro entrepreneurs, rather than to taking away any freedom they enjoy now. For example, government may recognize them as special category of business with a given set of rights in operating their businesses. The government may make it clear that only the laws and regulations made specifically for micro entrepreneurs will apply to them, not the pre-existing laws and regulations.



## Create Ministry of Micro Entrepreneurs

A government traditionally has a Ministry of Labour headed by a full minister. This displays the political and economic importance given to the labour. Under the same logic I see it very important to create a Ministry of Micro Entrepreneurs to provide the legal, institutional, and political support to the micro entrepreneur sector. After all they constitute more than half the population of the country who remained neglected and abandoned for no fault of their own.

If a government is interested in building rural economy as a parallel economy, in stopping migration of youth to the urban centres, in industrialization of rural areas by processing rural produce with rural labour, and in integrating women and neglected segments of the society into the mainstream economy, creation of this ministry will be a powerful step and a clear message to the rural areas.

## Agency for Assisting Micro Entrepreneurs

Parallel to creating new sets of laws and a regulatory system for micro entrepreneurs, the Ministry of Micro Entrepreneurs can create a separate government agency dedicated to helping the micro entrepreneurs to deal with all government offices and agencies. This newly created government agency, the 'Agency for Assisting the Micro Entrepreneurs', will be dedicated to making communication between government and the micro entrepreneurs very easy. This agency will interpret the language of the government to the micro entrepreneurs, and vice versa. It will protect the rights of the micro entrepreneurs. If any micro entrepreneur or group of micro entrepreneurs have any problem with any government office or agency, or any entities — government, or non-government, they will bring their problems to this office. The responsibility of this agency is to resolve the problem by protecting the interest of the micro entrepreneurs. The staff of this agency should make themselves recognized as friends of micro entrepreneurs.

This agency will also help micro entrepreneurs to establish their 'Chambers of Micro Entrepreneurs' at various levels, local, district, state, and national level, to interact, with other similar bodies, and the government.

## Nobody Has to Leave the Place of Birth to Find Survival Livelihood

Corona Pandemic has brought a new opportunity for the whole world, to build the world with a new beginning, to abandon what

anything that stands on way to building a new economy and a new society, and introducing the new ideas and concepts which will be the building blocks of the future. India must not miss this opportunity.

India needs to take very bold decisions to redesign the economy and the society. Creating a people-centric economy must be the core of this programme. One core goal of this redesigning programme must be to make sure that nobody— men, women, youth, has to leave his or her place of birth to find a survival livelihood. There should be enough opportunities for survival livelihood within the walking distance of one's own home. A concomitant goal should be that nobody has to go to a loan shark to take the initiative to become a micro entrepreneur. Financial institutions will be standing by to support the entrepreneurship of all people. No young person has to leave his/her villages to go to urban centres to pursue quality higher education. Academic institutions of high standards will be available in the rural areas. Universities, IITs, IIMs, medical colleges, hospitals, business schools, research institutions will be built up to make sure rural people do not have to abandon their own villages for quality healthcare and education. India already has examples of world class academic and health institutions located in remote rural areas. Now they stand out as exceptions. They have to be done as a matter of policy and a matter of right of the rural people.

## Freeing the Micro Entrepreneurs from Loan Sharks

The moment we view the people in the informal sector as micro entrepreneurs, scope for building new institutions emerges right away.

By building appropriate financial system for the rural area we can ignite life at the base of the entrepreneurship pyramid. Finance is the basic fuel of entrepreneurship. But fair financial services always remained far cry for the micro entrepreneurs. In the absence of any financial institution built for them, they remain to be the prime meat for loan sharks. Most of the micro entrepreneurs begin their entrepreneurial journey empty handed. Their entrepreneurial ventures start with financing from loan sharks, and they can hardly grow out of it because of the harsh conditionality of the loans. Micro credit emerged as a big new help for them, but it could reach only small part of them yet.

Most important support for micro entrepreneurs will be to protect them from loan sharks.

## Recent Initiatives in India to Expand the Credit Horizon

India has worked on the goal of expanding the credit horizon for over the last three decades by bringing access to credit to the poorer segments of population, particularly rural women, through microfinance programmes. While the access to formal credit has improved significantly, it is still long way to go for vast majority of micro entrepreneurs to free themselves from loan sharks.

NABARD promoted the SHG model and provided refinance to banks who lent to such groups which came to be known as the Bank Linkage model. The number of borrowers under the SHG lending and the MFIs put together is estimated to be about 85 million. Commercial banks also work with MFIs as their channels for distributing priority sector loans and other government schemes such as MUDRA (Micro-Units Development and Refinance Agency) loans for micro-entrepreneurs.

Microfinance has to depend on loans from banks, large NBFCs and equity from commercial venture capital firms. The result is the high cost of lending to small ticket borrowers and short duration of loans for their borrowers. Faced with the high cost of funds, the return-seeking MFIs focus on the low-middle income segment of the population. They added consumption loans in their portfolio to enhance profitability, deviating from the objective of microfinance to concentrate on income-generating loans. Being deprived from the permission to take deposit the MFIs remained as agents of the financing institutions without having any chance of ever becoming self-reliant institutions.

## True Microfinance is a Social Business

Some MFIs were given a license to turn themselves into Small Finance Banks. With the requirement of high capital requirement it went to the hands of profit-seeking investors. I always draw attention to the fundamental features of microfinance institution that we developed.

Basic elements in this financial institution are: a) it must be a social business bank, b) dedicated to rural poorest — focusing on women, to support their entrepreneurship, c) it will be based on banking without collateral, d) and it will be a proper bank with deposit taking power to make sure it remains to be a financially self-reliant institution.



Social business part of microfinance is not only completely forgotten, many microfinance institutions were created by enthusiastically promoting themselves as highly profitable businesses. We created microfinance institutions to fight loan sharks, but never thought a day may come when microfinance institutions themselves may become the tool in the hands of loan sharks. This abuse the concept of microfinance. became quite wide spread. We keep on drawing attention to the difference between true microfinance institution and wrong microfinance institution by insisting that a true microfinance institution must be designed and operated as a social business. Agency for Assisting Micro Entrepreneurs.

Microfinance originated with Grameen Bank in Bangladesh by challenging the banking system. It pointed out that the real reason for not lending money to the poor by the banks, is not about the credit-worthiness of the people, as is usually explained, it is the absence of people-worthiness of the banks. Grameen Bank developed a daring concept of banking, — banking without collateral, defying the existing banking norms. This became known as microcredit or microfinance. India adopted it and expanded to become it the largest micro-credit programme in the world. Two basic features of microfinance are missing in India, a) running it as a social business (i.e. as a business without any intention to make personal profit out of it by the non-borrowers), and b) taking deposits. Now is a good time to integrate these two features in the Indian microfinance world. This agency will also help micro entrepreneurs to establish their 'Chambers of Micro Entrepreneurs' at various levels, local, district, state, and national level, to interact, with other similar bodies, and the government.

### Will Microfinance in India survive Covid 19 Crisis

Now corona crisis has given rise to a new question — can microfinance in India survive this massive crisis.

Given our experience in Bangladesh, the answer is a firm 'yes'. Bangladesh goes routinely through floods and cyclones, destroying houses, possessions, animals, businesses, even taking lives. But microfinance always bounces back. Poor people's lives are woven with endless disasters. Coping with disasters is an integral part of microfinance. Grameen Bank made sure its staff understood that microfinance is about people, not about money. Money is a tool to give the people a chance to fight for their lives.

### Micro Entrepreneur Bank for Micro Entrepreneur Sector

Micro entrepreneur sector as a whole deserves a new class of dedicated financial institution, as Social Business Micro Entrepreneur Bank (MEB). Entire micro entrepreneur sector will dramatically change if it is created by passing a new law, if needed. MFIs and small finance banks can take up leadership role in creating social business MEBs. It will be made legally mandatory to make all MEBs as social businesses.

Social business is a business with zero personal profit, aiming at solving of specific problem faced by people. This is a very important feature to be built into any financial institution built for the micro entrepreneurs. Given the tradition of loan sharking, financial institutions built for micro entrepreneurs quickly start imitating loan sharks in their operations. If there is no bar on taking personal profit from MEBs investors looking for high profit will rush to it attracted by the size of the market. Safest thing to do is to close the door for personal profit by requiring by law that MEB to be social business.

Existing commercial banks, small finance banks, cooperative banks, any other financial organizations, NGOs, companies, individuals, MFIs may apply for MEB license as a subsidiary or as a new entity.

MEBs may create Social Business Venture Capital Funds as their subsidiaries to provide equity to unemployed young people to become entrepreneurs

The goal of MEBs would be to free all micro entrepreneurs from loan sharks — formal, and informal.

### Dedicated Regulatory Authority is Crucial for Success

Another important aspect to ensure success of MEBs is to create a dedicated regulatory authority. If MEBs are regulated by regulators who are not well-versed with the concept and the creativity needed for the operation of financial institutions for the poor, it will be doomed to failure. Unsympathetic regulators can destroy the entire possibilities of financial institutions for micro entrepreneurs. To achieve success the best thing to do is to create an autonomous regulatory authority under the chairmanship of the Governor of RBI. Bangladesh created a Microcredit Regulatory Authority as an autonomous entity headed by the Governor of the central bank, by an Act of Parliament back in 2006. It contributed significantly in the success of micro-credit system in Bangladesh.

### MEB Should be Created as a Rural Institution

In order to make rural economies as independent economies one fundamental requirement would be to create institutions dedicated to rural areas. Historically urban institutions were extended to the rural areas to fill the need for institutional services to rural areas, ignoring the fact that urban institutions were not good fit for rural areas. They were not enthusiastic about doing this job either. As result rural areas never had the opportunity to grow in its own way.

Government may encourage all commercial banks and financial institutions to create social business MEBs as rural subsidiaries serving rural micro entrepreneurs. To encourage them government may give incentives to banks and all financial institutions such as providing preferential treatment in their core businesses depending on the size of their MEB operations.

In addition to dedicated social business MEBs, there should be exclusively designed social business venture capital funds, social business investment funds, social business insurance companies, and so on.

### Time is Right

Creation of Social Business Micro Entrepreneur Bank is the key to unleashing the entrepreneurial power of masses and creating the rural economy as a parallel economy to the traditional urban-centric economy. Given the right conceptual framework and appropriate institutions and policies, rural economies can be strong economies dealing with the rest of the world. With information and communication technology covering all rural areas in India and cleaner air quality, if we can add good political leadership, presence of quality educational institutions and healthcare facilities rural areas will enjoy many advantages over urban centres as a choice of location for many businesses. Transporting unprocessed agricultural inputs and sending migrant labour to the cities can be made a matter of past. It is the new vision of rural economy which will make this happen. Time is right for this new vision.

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Nobel Peace Laureate 2006  
Founder of Grameen Bank



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