



Welcome Remarks by Co-Chairs

Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, former President of Liberia
The Right Honourable Helen Clark, former Prime Minister of New Zealand

To the 5th Meeting of the Independent Panel for Pandemic Preparedness and Response
17 March 2021

Remarks of Her Excellency Ellen Johnson Sirleaf

Greetings to each of you.

We are happy to welcome you all to our 5th Panel meeting. We are pleased because we have now largely passed the stages of factfinding and analyses. We now have facts and evidence that are leading to our clear findings.

For today and tomorrow, therefore, we meet to discuss conclusions and recommendations after we listen to presentations about national and subnational responses and socioeconomic costs and impact.

As we have read in the papers prepared for this meeting, the pandemic is casting a long shadow of social and economic consequences, especially for the world's poor. We have heard from many people who say they have been bumped down a rung on the ladder, or more. If you were doing okay, you are doing worse. If you were struggling, you now struggle more. And if your life was precarious, well, it is hanging in the balance. Everything that was weak has been made weaker. The road to recovery for many is long and uneven. Across countries, we see multi-speed recovery pathways.

We heard recently from Mayors in a roundtable meeting. I was struck by one commonality between cities from around the world. People who were undocumented – whether in one of the richest countries – or one of the poorest – couldn't access social protections, because they did not exist on any register. They may not have had identification cards. If there was food delivered to an address, there were many people with no address.

The costs, both in human lives and dollar amounts, are huge. But history has proven there is nothing we cannot do if we are united as one global community.

The depth of the transformation we seek together requires of us bold recommendations aimed at dismantling the underlying structures which nurture inequities. People who are poor, people

who are marginalized, those who have faced structural injustices are at too much of a disadvantage during this recovery process. We must keep their lives and their voices at the heart of our conclusions and recommendations.

With that, I hand over to Prime Minister Clark.

Remarks of The Right Honourable Helen Clark

Thank you, President Sirleaf. Welcome to all. Panellists, to put it bluntly – we are getting to crunch time for our report. We have gathered a lot of evidence and it has been subjected to a lot of analysis. Based on what we have learned, we need to formulate recommendations.

Today we will discuss the evidence compiled on national responses and on the socioeconomic impacts. We are still holding roundtables and Exchange discussions in order to keep listening to and learning from people.

We must use today's and tomorrow's deliberations to sharpen our focus on our conclusions and recommendations.

Our mission from the outset has been clear – to look back at how the pandemic happened, and to make recommendations which, if implemented, would stop another such event happening. If the existing system from global to national level was good enough, the worst would not have happened.

Any number of previous reports have pointed out the shortcomings of the current system. Yet their recommendations have often not been heeded. The status quo isn't just not good enough – it has actually had catastrophic consequences.

I would like to acknowledge every panellist for the huge amount of work you have done, and also our Secretariat which has driven us and itself hard. Collectively, we have built the foundations for a hard-hitting and impactful report in May.

END