

# Resilience and Recovery From COVID\_19 Through Sound Policymaking

## Regional Webinars in Africa

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### Summary of remarks by R. ALTER, Member of UNCEPA

- I. The COVID\_19 pandemic has sharpened the awareness of risk and crisis management in public policies - at global level, at national, regional and city level.  
What seemed to be a complex and wicked problem best left to virologists, medical doctors and health workers quickly turned into an unprecedented challenge of everyday survival of people, businesses and societies. Governments – mostly unprepared for the shock – were focused in the early days on organizing the health care response. As it is typical for systemic risks, damages in other sectors require to broaden the policy perspective: the health crisis is provoking economic, social and political crises in many countries. The chain of events is both driven by and causing the loss of trust in government as capable provider of safety and security for citizens.  
Organizing policies for recovery and building back better, resilience becomes a critical concern of public policies. How to build forward better to soften the decline once the next crisis comes around, to recover faster and to use fully the opportunities of transforming the system by building forward better?
- II. Despite the truly global character of the shock, governments are responding differently across continents and countries.  
First, the exposure to the shock differs with the state of preparedness, living memories of previous experience, degrees of integration into globalization, among others.  
Second, the means of response differ widely, depending on the capacities of the government machinery or the fiscal space for supporting citizens, businesses, workers, the vulnerable.  
The diversity of exposure and means in addition to the individual characteristics of countries implies that peer learning and peer exchanges on risk management practices cannot easily orient themselves at general standards. They should rather be based on the shared commitment of governments to sustainability, the SDGs and a risk culture guided by resilience.
- III. What does anchor response, recovery and resilience in the SDGs mean for risk management?  
Most of all that risk management can no longer be considered and organized as separate policy challenge policy with separate institutional setups. It calls for urgent integration with coherent policy making and

institutions, with changing mindsets, political commitment, integrated institutions, collaboration, data and indicators to become the everyday practices of public policies.

#### IV. What are the consequences for risk management in Africa?

So far, the experience of the pandemic in Africa seems to be less dramatic although at the time of drafting this summary, new mutations of the virus have been identified in South Africa and are spreading around the world.

In terms of exposure, favorable structural factors for lower rates of infection could be related to the epidemic experiences in several African countries which prompted governments to introduce swiftly contact restrictions. A demographic situation with a low average age of the population and lagging integration in global trade and tourism flows may also keep down speed and breadth of transmission. On the other hand, insufficient health care facilities, poverty, and undernourishment remain major risk factors of a rapid deterioration of the situation.

In terms of policy responses to the pandemic shock, low GDP growth, little fiscal space, high debts, falling commodity prices and lacking digitalization weigh considerably on the capacities of many African countries to launch decisive recovery measures or to invest in resilience. Over the medium term, integrating SDG and risk management institutions across levels of government appears to be the most promising approach to be better prepared for risk and crises.

International assistance and cooperation have particular responsibilities for the African continent to facilitate strategies in favor of adequate health care conditions, the protection of the vulnerable and economic development in African countries. Beyond the urgent provision of vaccines, trade and investment need to be at the center of bilateral and multilateral programs for Africa. The new global tax regime reinforcing the fight against tax evasion and the fair attribution of tax revenues across countries should be another welcome lever of support.