



COUNTRY : The United States of America

Committee : United Nations Development Programme

Agenda : Post Lockdown Relief Plan

Life vs Livelihood ... a tug-of-war !!

Humanity today struggles to survive the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected over 187 countries in the world. Governments and healthcare systems are struggling to save lives and contain the pandemic, medical research is working overtime for a cure and a vaccine in their efforts to eliminate COVID-19. Majority of the world is under lockdown in its containment efforts. There is collaboration and an united effort in the world to end this pandemic ... and eventually human beings will succeed .. there is no doubt !!

What next ??

The reality !! - Lockdowns eventually have to end Life needs to re-start !!

World economy is in dire straits massive unemployment is staring us in the face, Industries across are staring at staggering losses ... many businesses will probpeople dead, our healthcare system, despite being one of the best and most equipped inably not survive this storm, poverty and hunger is going to increase manifold, daily wage workers will probably bear the maximum brunt, education calenders have gone for a toss, sports and entertainment calenders have gone haywire and stare at huge losses ... travel and tourism will experience newer challenges ... in short ... life will not be the same again for a long long time !!

Unity is our strength and diversity our power

The member nations of the UN must come together to fight this post pandemic crisis, with all the knowledge and resources ... and with all its might !!

On that note, the United States of America extends its hand and will bring all that we have to the table.

We as a nation have suffered;

Over 1.2 Million infections and more than 74,000 dead, our healthcare system, despite being one of the best in the world, was overwhelmed with the sheer number of patients they had to deal with. The massive nos. of hospital beds, ICUs, Ventilators, PPEs ... everything fell short with the deluge of patients swamping the system.

We were caught off-guard. Early warning information on the contagion and its R0 were suppressed for a long period by the origin country. Borders were left open, flights kept pouring in from across the world, everything worked normally in the US in absence of vital flags being raised from early affected countries. By the time we realized the potential impact, the damage was done.

Borders were sealed, flights and other travel suspended, every state issued lockdown orders and guidelines, the healthcare system sprung into action in full swing ... but it had spread too wide and deep by then ... leaving our country in a state of turmoil.

The pandemic has already caused more destruction of American lives than Pearl Harbour and 9/11.

More than 33 Mill people have applied for unemployment.

But this is America ... and we will rise from the ashes ... like the Phoenix ... as we have always done in the past, when faced with disasters !!

- 9/11
- The Great Depression
- Pearl Harbour
- Great Flood

And so many more tragedies that America has pushed past .

In the words of Warren Buffet - " Never bet against America"

We are fighting this battle with the virus and we are slowly and steadily flattening the curve ... reducing infection rates, increasing recoveries, reducing death rates ... we are winning this war ...sooner than later !!

AMERICA WILL BE GREAT AGAIN !!!.....

The Post COVID-19 situation - How is America winning this battle?

We as a nation are doing our all to help our citizens financially to keep lights on, roofs over their heads and food in their stomachs.

- A 2.3 trillion dollar stimulus package has been approved to keep people financially stable
- Every citizen gets USD 1000 cheque to keep them afloat and take care of minimum basics during these trying times.
- Plans of new stimulus package to give each citizen additional USD 2000 cheque
- SMEs will receive USD 5000 cheques to help them stay afloat
- Govt. is working on bailout packages for industries which have been specifically hard-hit due to the lockdown ... the airlines, hospitality, automobile and durable manufacturing, Real estate, Wholesale trade, etc.
- Based on gauging further stimulus requirements for the poor, Govt. will make further cash availability for daily wage workers and the unemployed.
- The President has suspended immigration activity for a period of 60 days (and may extend based on situation) in line with the America First policy, to ensure the US citizens who are unemployed get the first shot at jobs opening up post lockdown.
- The Federal Reserve has taken unprecedented actions to save the economy during the pandemic. There have been rate cuts and a slew of credit and lending programs that could inject more than \$6 trillion into the economy.

Fed would start buying commercial paper, or the short-term unsecured debt that businesses rely on for operational cash.

The Fed also announced a \$300 billion credit program for businesses and consumers.

Fed will provide support to the Treasury's Payment Protection Program aimed at incentivizing businesses not to lay off employees

A recovery framework for the world:

- An economic stimulus package to citizens and industries is the need of the hour and every nation should work on providing this stimulus to their economy. US has used stimulus packages in the past to revive whole industries to save them from collapsing. After 9/11 the airline industry was in trouble, the govt. passed a 15 billion dollar package to revive it.
- Rate cuts, creating more liquidity in the financial system, reducing borrowing rates to make them more affordable, re-structuring of existing loans, moratoriums, tax holidays, reducing direct and indirect taxes etc. many such measures will have to be undertaken by the Central Banks and the ensuing financial institutions (Banks, NBFCs, Micro-finance) to help revive both supply and demand.
- While the economy as a whole is hit, there are certain industries that will bear the brunt more than others. Industries like Airlines, Travel and tourism, Hospitality, Real-estate, SMEs in general, Automobile (in some countries at least) etc. will require bailout packages to help them steady the ship.
- Millions have or are expected to lose jobs across the world as industries will be forced to take austerity measures to be able to survive. Governments across the world will grapple with this issue and will need to provide short-term financial aid to these people to help them survive. A quick revival plan for most industries will be required to be taken up on priority and govts. will have to facilitate this revival of economy to create demand for jobs again and help reduce unemployment.
- While all govts. will require to take many of these steps and many more localized measures to help revive their economy, it is also a fact that many Govts., particularly the developing and poor nations will not have the financial resources to implement these, and they will have to depend on external borrowings, Aid from World Organizations like IMF, World Bank, etc.
- There are many Govts. particularly among the developing and poor nations, who already have massive existing external borrowings that they had taken towards various development projects, viz., Infrastructure, healthcare system, etc. Many of them, in the current situation are staring at Loan default as they grapple to save their economies. Unless their debt repayments are deferred by a year or more many of these nations will go into default status. This is where Developed Nations and their Banks need to come forward to extend a helping hand by deferring their repayment schedules.
- This pandemic has left even some of the best Healthcare systems in some of the top developed nations in the world including the US, overwhelmed and underprepared. The pandemic has shown us that Epidemiological systems in many of the nations are outdated and insufficient to respond to catastrophes of such magnitude. We need to re-look and overhaul our systems

based on current learnings, as pandemics could strike again in future.

One of the nations that stand out in this mayhem is South Korea. Their response and their epidemiological system has been exemplary. South Korea being one of the early victims of COVID-19, having very little advance warning time to prepare, their aggressive contact tracing, testing, tracking, containment approach along with massive disinfection drives helped them win the battle early on ... so much so that they could afford to conduct parliamentary elections in their country without any issues, while the rest of the world is still grappling with the pandemic.

- Technology and its use has been one of the bright sparks in this season of gloom and doom. While people were forced to be confined in their homes and businesses shut down during the lockdowns implemented by most of the nations, technology kept people connected, essentials running.

Virtual meetings using apps like Zoom, Webex etc. became the socializing and business meeting tools. Videoconferencing is how Governments and diplomacy were working. Education was being imparted online. Social media was buzzing with activity. Creativity was showcased online, entertainment, sports and even concerts went online. Online Ordering of essential supplies like medicine, food, groceries, etc. was the way out. OTT Platforms saw a surge in viewership as people staying indoors needed an overdose of content to keep themselves entertained.

Smartphones / laptops / tablets were the go to devices for most of these activities, they were the most relevant things that impacted peoples' lives. Post lockdown and this pandemic, there are lot of learnings, new ways to interact, conduct business, entertainment, impart education, order essentials, and many many more activities. Not that these were not there earlier, this lockdown just reinforced technology and its use and adoption in a much bigger way and more inclusive in this world.

Robots will disinfect homes, offices and hospitals ... drones will deliver many goods and packages at our doorstep, remote access and interaction will assume a big change in the way we work, travel, educate ourselves. E-commerce and E-tailing will have an even bigger adoption in the world. Businesses and governments will have to see this as the new normal and will have to adopt this newer order.

- Research labs across the world and all Pharma majors are working on miracle drug, a vaccine against COVID-19. The reality is that developed nations have more resources and funds available to them for such research, compared to developing nations. As has been seen in the past, such drugs and vaccines are first made available in the developed nations and they are in a better financial position to purchase out the bulk of such drugs for their citizens, leaving the developing nations with long queues and sometimes exorbitant prices at which they have to procure for their countries.

We have even seen similar situations in the current pandemic where countries like India had temporarily banned export of drugs like Hydrochloroquine (supposedly a prophylactic drug

against COVID-19 to some extent), Paracetamol, PPEs, and even Hand-sanitizers, leaving other countries fighting the same battle struggling due to shortage of these resources.

An even bigger allegation during this pandemic was against China, for supposedly hoarding medical supplies, particularly PPEs, Ventilators, Masks, etc. We have been given to understand that China withheld vital information about the origin, spread and human transmission nature of COVID-19 in the initial days (particularly between Dec-19 and Jan-20) from the world and even the WHO, and in the meanwhile continued importing massive supplies of medical equipment while stopping its export of PPEs, masks, ventilators, etc. to cater to their own country's situation, and in-fact selling their surplus later to the rest of the world at a higher price when they needed these desperately. This is tantamount to hoarding and has had a disastrous impact in the rest of the world's ability to prepare and fight the pandemic.

All nations in the UN need to come together and pledge to stop such practices and ensure more equitable distribution of critical medical supplies to every member country who requests for such supplies. This needs to apply to other essential goods as well like food grains, other life-saving drugs, in fact any goods of such nature that have a direct impact on sustenance and battle against such pandemics.

The world will surely win the battle against this pandemic ... as the human race has always in the past !! We will surely have a cure or vaccine against COVID-19 in the near future. But lives are being lost, more will be lost till we can stop the virus. Economies are in dire straits (thanks to the much required lockdowns), and the impact will be felt for a long time. This catastrophe has tested us, and also warned us .. pull up your socks humans .. there could be more coming your way in future. The lockdown has forced us to think differently, do things differently.

When this ends there will be a new normal ... new ways to live, work, do business, communicate, entertain, etc. ... how we deal with healthcare, climate, animals and nature ... some nations and economies will do better than others ... the balance of power in the world order may shift .. new power structures may emerge or older ones may reclaim lost glory ... surely lot will change .. from how we used to ... to how we will ... hopefully for the better !!

We, the member nations of the UN, need to come together ... not only to see off the pandemic ... but lead the economic recovery of the world ... and adopt the new normal !!

"All birds find shelter during rain. But eagles avoid the rain by flying above the clouds. Problems are common, but attitude is what makes the difference"

~ Dr. APJ Abdul Kalam