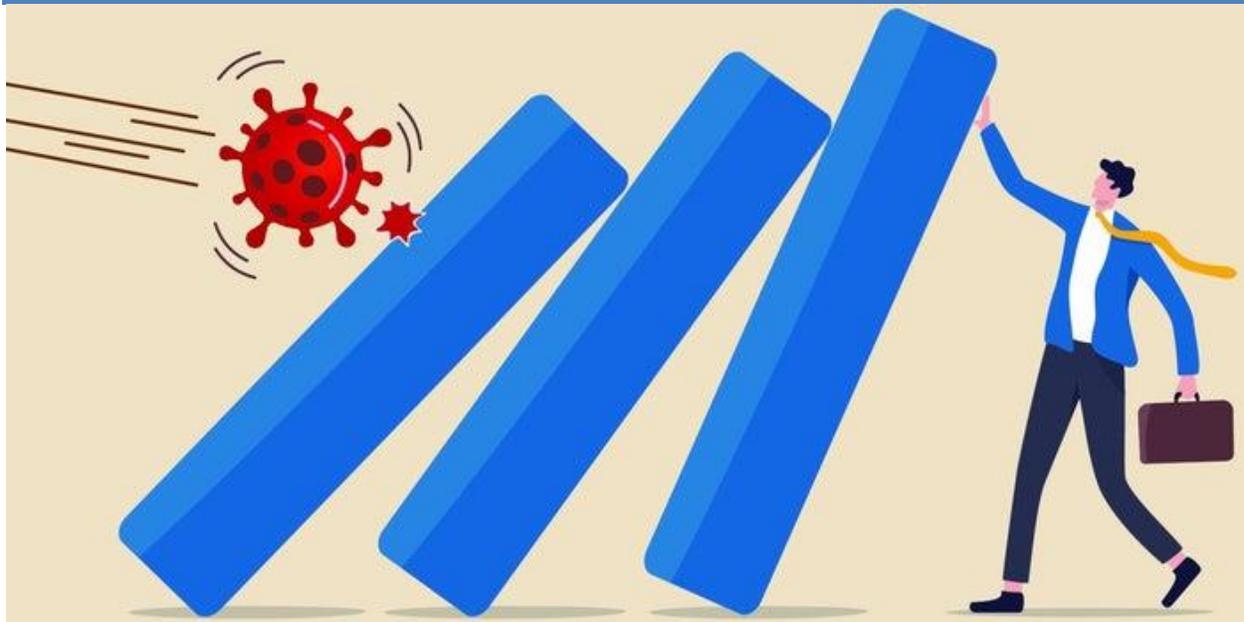




Network India



## *International Panel Series Shaping a Sustainable Business Post Covid*



### **Panel Discussions**

- ✚ **Business Resilience: 8<sup>th</sup> July 2020**
- ✚ **Supply Chain Disruption: 14<sup>th</sup> July 2020**
- ✚ **Reskilling and Digitalization: 23<sup>rd</sup> July 2020**
- ✚ **Sustaining SMEs: 30<sup>th</sup> July 2020**

## Background

The outbreak of the novel Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic and subsequent lockdown has posed several challenges for the Indian industry, which include liquidity crisis, lack of manpower and disruption of business operations: affecting continuity and sustainability of businesses. Virtually all major sectors of the economy such as health, automobiles, real estate, construction, steel, and energy, etc. are facing the brunt of the pandemic.

The COVID-19 pandemic has engulfed the entire world in an unprecedented manner. The socio-economic impact of the disaster is yet to be ascertained, but it is no guess that we need to be prepared for an enormous disruption at a global scale, and at socio-economical front.

There is an urgent need to channelize all our resources in order to push ahead and face the challenge. Every sector and strata of the society will need to be a part of it and the way forward lies only in collective action. The businesses have a crucial role to play during and post the pandemic. There is a need for businesses not only to sustain and adapt themselves but to support the private sector and society in these uncertain times and in an uncharted territory.

Keeping Covid crises and the importance of business continuity in mind, the Centre of Excellence for Governance, Ethics and Transparency (**CEGET**) at Global Compact Network India (GCNI) and Alliance for Integrity (**AfIN**) India, organised an International Panel Series on the theme of “Shaping a Sustainable Business Post COVID” in the month of July 2020. The series was organised with an objective to discuss issues which have left businesses reeling under the pandemic and to promote a global exchange of knowledge, experiences, and best practices.

The Series conducted 4 sessions, with speakers from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America representing all the relevant stakeholders including companies, business associations, international organizations, civil society organizations and public sector representatives. The series was very well received with over 600 participants from more than 12 countries. The series brought to the fore the discussion by the distinguished

speakers on the topics and their responses to the participants' queries helped the businesses understand their challenges and develop strategies to deal with Covid crises and become stronger and sustainable business.

## **Objectives**

- ❖ Identifying, prioritizing, and formulating a plan to deal with Covid challenges.
- ❖ Understanding the way in which business can support in minimizing the social impact of Covid pandemic.
- ❖ Know-how the role of Corporate Social Responsibility (CSR) and best practices of business community to fight Covi19.
- ❖ Understanding Supply Chain Disruption in the face of Covid crises and preparedness for future challenges.
- ❖ Enhancing the role of Business Associations and Business Chambers in creating awareness and linkages between the Government and the SMEs.

## **Rationale**

The COVID-19 outbreak is a sharp reminder that pandemics, like other rarely occurring catastrophes, have happened in the past and will continue to happen in the future. Even if we cannot prevent dangerous viruses from emerging, we should prepare to dampen their effects on society. The current outbreak has had severe economic consequences across the globe, and it does not look like any country will be unaffected. This not only has consequences for the economy; all of society is affected, which has led to dramatic changes in how businesses act and consumers behave.

The COVID-19 pandemic outbreak has forced many businesses to close, leading to an unprecedented disruption of commerce in most industry sectors. Retailers and brands face many short-term challenges, such as those related to health and safety, the supply chain, the workforce, cash flow, consumer demand, sales, and marketing. However, successfully navigating these challenges will not guarantee a promising future, or any future at all. This is because once we get through this pandemic: we will emerge in a different world compared to the one before the outbreak. Many markets, especially in the fields of tourism and hospitality, no longer exist. All organizational functions are intended

to prioritize and optimize spending or postpone tasks that will not bring value in the current environment.

As we are in the middle of a pandemic outbreak, it is difficult to estimate its long-term effects. It is also hard to estimate the long-term economic, behavioral, or societal consequences as these aspects have not been studied and assessed by the business sector and Govt as well.

Uniting business in this Decade Of Action is crucial, especially in post Covid times and therefore it becomes more difficult for business to sustain ethically and contribute to the nation's building. With this understanding, the International Panel Series on 'Shaping a Sustainable Business post-Covid' that was organized jointly by Centre of Excellence for Governance, Ethics and Transparency (CEGET) at Global Compact Network India and Alliance for Integrity (AfIN) India provided a platform to business community to understand their challenges, develop sustainable strategy/plan to effectively deal with Covid pandemic and understand their role in social and economic development of the nation.

## Panel Discussion (Proceedings)

### 1. Business Resilience

The session was held on July 8, 2020 and moderated by Mr. Anirban Ghosh, Chief Sustainability Officer, Mahindra Group. Giving an overview of Business Resilience, Mr. Ghosh said that there is already panic in the market with rating agencies predicting reduction in global growth rate and an imminent recession is in waiting. The businesses big or small will take a hit. The dilemmas are plenty like production, supply chain, market volatility, sluggishness in the market and unemployment.



Amidst all, it is easy to forget about the conducive environment the pandemic creates for corruption in the market. Survival of businesses will be dependent by how quickly they adapt themselves to the disruptions caused due to COVID, while maintaining continuity of business operations and taking care of people, asset, and business equity. It is time that we have discussion around businesses sustainability, continuity, and marketability.

### **The Panelists of the session**

- Ms. Olajobi Makinwa, Chief of Intergovernmental Relations and Africa, UN Global Compact and Senior Advisor to the President of UN General Assembly.
- Mr. Bernhard steinrucke, Director General, Indo-German Chamber of Commerce.
- Ms. Susanne Friedrich, Director, Alliance for Integrity.
- Dr. Ashutosh Karnatak, Former Director (Projects) and CMD, GAIL.

The discussion convened leading voices from Business, Government, the UN agencies , Civil Society Organization and Academia about how we can make businesses more resilient and rebuild more inclusive economies and societies to set a new course for a socially just, low-carbon and climate resilient world with a main focus on redefining business strategies to ensure we recover better. The panelists deliberated on issues like the challenges in supply chain management, the importance of being positive in Covid crises time and the need for raising awareness, knowledge, and capacities. The session also highlighted the importance of business in this decade of action. Burning issues were raised and practical solutions were also discussed.

The speakers addressed the problems that the country is facing due to the global pandemic and talked about how it not only demands a prompt response but is also a wake-up call for the entire world to adopt responsible business practices and how people are responsible to shape the future together. They expressed their concerns on how Covid-19 has caused disruption like never before, which also explains to us that in a connected world, disruption can come from anywhere and what seems impossible today might happen tomorrow. They also discussed the need for business models to innovate on social equity and inclusion and the need for the private sector to collaborate with the government and work hand in hand to recover from the colossal shock that the pandemic has posed on our country.

Businesses must learn from the situation and make roadmaps for building robust organizations' and carry out a robust risk analysis. MNC's have to work actively towards the elimination of poverty and inequality.

Ms. Olajobi Makinwa said – “For accomplishing the Agenda 2030, businesses must build resilience in their DNAs and must leave no one behind, which is the motto of UN’s



Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). We need to find a way to stick to the goals and in order to do that, we need new plans for the new normal. Optimisation of the workforce is also equally important especially after rescaling. This time should be utilised for the training of the people. This is the time when we have to think about the people, think about the profits and definitely think about the planet”.

**Bernhard Steinrucke** talked about the loopholes in the supply chain management and how the supply chain systems have prioritised saving money and keeping the prices low as opposed to focusing on being safe and reliable. The panelists expressed their concerns on how the virus has caused a great deal of economic and social disruptions and exposed harsh truths about the shift in the global risks but despite all the challenges that this crisis has brought along with it, it is important for us to know the fact that it is also, at the same time, a great opportunity for the world to introspect and improve on multiple aspects.



**Susanne Friedrich** defined a resilient organisation as “an organisation that does not go back to where it started before the crisis but it is an organisation that has transformed and built attitudes, beliefs, agility and structure to be able to jump forward quickly”. Therefore,



we need strong leadership that gives orientation but also shows empathy by putting the people in the centre of our attention. Companies are now accelerating the digitalisation of their operations which offers a lot of business opportunities and benefits to the environment. These companies need strong networks and collaborations with different stakeholders in order to help them to develop synergies to come up with solutions for the new challenges.

**Dr. Ashutosh Karnatak** talked about the stumbling blocks that come with the pandemic. He said that the leaders focused on espousing a positive approach and also talked about how we



can use this as an opportunity in our attempt to build back better and instead of considering it as a 'Rewind' button, we should consider it as a 'Reset' button. He promoted optimism and highlighted the importance of recovering fast from the adversities.

Finally, the speakers highlighted the importance of collaboration. They explained how the Global Compact acts as a platform of platforms for business development and sustainability. They also talked about the importance of embedding the Global Compact's 10 principles as they are extremely important for recovery. The SDGs also play a great role during this time of crisis as they act like roadmaps for building back better. It is important for companies to optimize manpower to fuel effectiveness and efficiency. The panelists concluded by calling to the companies all over the world to align their strategies with universal issues and take actions.

## **2. Supply Chain Disruption**

The session was held on July 14, 2020 and moderated by Mr. Joe Phelan, Director, WBCSD, India. At the outset, he gave an overview of Supply Chain Disruption saying that as the COVID-19 pandemic ripples throughout the world economy, transforming lives in ways many never thought possible, businesses across the globe, continue to face unprecedented supply chain disruptions. With supply chain shortages, new border restrictions, large-scale layoffs, and virtual lockdowns in cities with significant coronavirus outbreaks, organizations are finding it difficult to weather the impact of Covid and future plan -protect their business.



The pandemic is an unfolding story, with companies of varying industries providing mixed messaging in terms of continued production, while most consumers have no idea what the implications may or may not be in the coming days, weeks, and months. However, each disruption is an opportunity to revise an enterprise's business continuity plans and supply chain vetting process in order to ensure the reasonable continuity of operations.

Meanwhile, operational impact from COVID-19 throughout the supply chains may lead to risks of Fraud and Compliance issues, as companies shall be impacted by increased risk of procurement fraud, and non-compliance with internal procedures, relevant regulations, and legislation during the crisis.

### **The Panelists of the session**

- Mr. Suraj Prakash, Director Finance, BEML, India.
- Ms. Roselyn Awotwi-Pratt, Supply Chain Governance and Compliance Manager, Diageo-Guinness Ghana Breweries Ltd.
- Ms. Shahamin S Zaman, Executive Director, Global Compact Network Bangladesh.
- Ms. Shubha Sekhar, Director Human & Workplace Rights, The Coca-Cola Company.

**Ms. Roselyn** emphasized on the need to build trust amongst not only in the company but also within the supply chain and that this trust and mutual support is key to minimise the supply chain disruption.



**Ms. Shahamin Zaman** emphasized on the importance of addressing



not just the supply chain disruptions but transforming the whole idea of businesses in post COVID environment. Ms. Zaman shared the following experience based upon her work in Bangladesh and globally.

- In Bangladesh, Orders in process were stopped and brands that were sourcing from factories had to stop their work because of huge insecurities owing to occupation health and safety regulations.
- The pandemic not only created a gap in supply chain but also impacted work because factories could not pay wages to workers.
- As the factories had to work at 50% operational level, severe fund crunches were observed resulting in the non-payment of wages to the factory workers. The impact

on the women workers was more profound and is expected to affect the wellbeing of new generation as well.

- As the impact have serious ramifications globally and regionally, a global strategy focused on collective actions is warranted.
- In addition to the businesses, there is a need for buyers to be responsible for purchasing practices and responsible conduct.
- The businesses will need to take the responsibility of lives of the people who are impacted.
- The need to ensure compliance with human rights, SDG goals, business ethics and integrity was emphasized as Asia is the hub of sourcing for many countries around the world.

In short, she shared that the impact has serious ramifications globally and regionally, a global strategy focused on collective actions is warranted.

**Mr Suraj Prakash** highlighted that the Impact of such severity is not uniform across sectors and countries and that the pandemic had a huge impact on manufacturing and industry, thus concluding that there can be no one fits all solutions, but customised based on sectors and countries. He brought the attention to the fact that all the global economies are interconnected and highlighted the following points.



- The pandemic has caused supply chain disruptions which have impacted the industries in general and manufacturing sector.
- The pandemic had a huge impact on manufacturing and industry because of the domestic supply chain which got impacted because of the lockdowns.
- Business verticals having high dependence on global supply chain are impacted owing to their dependence on other countries.
- Strict social distancing norms also impacted the productivity to a certain extent.



**Ms. Shubha Shekhar** stressed on the fact that Supply chain disruptions have many dimensions and talked about the perspectives of people in supply chain from human rights point of view. According to her, the pandemic has demonstrated to the world the great importance of human rights in supply chains and the importance and responsibility of businesses over their supply chain networks. She shared that Coca cola was an early adopter to human rights approach.

She made following key observations:

- As the pandemic onslaught was a sudden development, there was no single way to identify what its impact would be, and responses of businesses were agile based upon the new developments.
- We need to find ways of protecting the health and safety of our workforce especially the vulnerable sections while restarting our business operations in post COVID environment.
- The pandemic disproportionately impacted the vulnerable sections all over the world and many of the HR issues in supply chain had their roots in poverty, inequality, and vulnerability, leading to exploitation of these sections.
- When vulnerability and poverty increase, risks increase proportionally, and every set of challenges has a set of opportunities.
- It was observed that businesses that had matured HR programmes backed by robust due diligence tools and governance framework had shown the best resilience during crisis and recovery.

In short, Ms. Shubha Shekhar emphasized that the pandemic has demonstrated to the world the great importance of human rights in supply chains and the importance and responsibility of businesses over their supply chain networks and also shared the best practices introduced by Coca Cola with its focus on human rights.

The discussions and presentations by the speakers were followed by interactions with the participants. Most of the participants raised concerns over the loopholes in the supply chain management and the tendency of supply chain systems to prioritise saving money

and keeping the prices low as opposed to focusing on being safe and reliable. It was agreed that such discussions will be continued on regular basis to evolve recommendations for the businesses and governments so that the resilience of businesses to such calamities may be enhanced while ensuring the compliance with protection of ethics and integrity practices.

### **3. Reskilling and Digitalization**

The session was held on July 30, 2020 and moderated by Mr. Suhas Tuljapurkar, Managing Partner, Legasis Partners, and Founder Director, Legasis Services Pvt. Ltd. Giving an overview and the importance of the session he shared that the Covid-19 coronavirus is becoming the accelerator for one of the greatest workplace transformations of our lifetime. How we work, exercise, shop, learn, communicate, and of course, where we work, will be changed forever. Businesses can't afford to put capability building and workplace learning on hold. To grapple with upheaval caused due to Covid-19, it's time we rethink how top management can empower the employees to upskill and relearn the skills to stay relevant. At this moment, the effective use of technology has never been more critical. There has been a huge rise in remote working as part of the campaign to reduce person-to-person contact and potential coronavirus infections. However, many jobs require a complete revamp of the way we work. This is where reskilling and upskilling became an important foundation for us and for businesses. To reskill is to learn new things, completely different from our usual expertise, while to upskill is to update our current knowledge and skills to strengthen them.



#### **The Panelists of the session**

1. Mr. Jeffery Cheung, Deputy Chairman, Indonesia Hong Kong Association.
2. Ms. Aditee Rele, Director, Cloud Solutions and Tech Strategy - ISV & Services Partners, Microsoft India.
3. Mr. Sudhanshu Naithani, General Manager, Corporate Strategic Management, Bharat Heavy Electricals Limited, India.

The speakers addressed the problems that the country is facing due to the global pandemic and talked about how it not only demands a prompt response but is also a

wake-up call for the entire world to adopt responsible business practices and how people are responsible to shape the future together. They expressed their concerns on how Covid-19 has caused disruption like never before and how it has affected everyone equally. They also discussed the need for business models to innovate on social equity and inclusion.

**Ms. Aditi Rele** highlighted the human resource aspect of the whole situation and talked about following three main aspects that need to be kept in mind for the new normal

- How do we respond to the situation securely for the employees?
- How to help businesses restart after the pandemic settles down?
- How to make ourselves ready for such a situation in the future/ How to reimagine businesses and the skills associated with them for the new normal?

She espoused a positive approach and said that “We are not going to lose jobs; we are



going to have to repurpose skills and repurpose jobs”. She suggested businesses to come up with ways in which we can use technology to make a difference. She talked about Machine learning, Artificial Intelligence, cloud solutions and so on. She also discussed the importance of reskilling continuously and suggested that after every

12-18 months, we re-introspect what we are capable of and add more dimensions to our persona to stay relevant.

She also discussed about how the level of productivity varies from generation to generation and keeps increasing with every new generation. She talked about ‘retirement’ and how with the help of constantly learning, one can have longevity of his/her career even after they retire and therefore, it is crucial to set goals for learning. She emphasized on the need for social entrepreneurship and the importance of driving agility in businesses.

**Mr. Jefferee Cheung** highlighted the importance of “learning how to learn” and talked about how it is important to lay on focus on three main aspects, namely,

- What is the best time to learn?
- What is the best way to learn?
- What is the best thing to learn?



He talked about the importance of digitalisation for businesses and how digitalisation is a great displacer of jobs. The speaker also mentioned about the importance of every business to look at digitalisation in a different fashion and how it is important for every business to come up with their own strategy that best suits their needs.

He mentioned about how the pandemic has affected the education sector as teachers and students are still coming to terms with online learning. They also raised their concerns with respect to the replacement of skills and the ability to be able to regrow them. They mentioned about the importance of social media usage, online marketing and developing soft skills. In other words, the speakers mainly discussed about the need to Reskill, Reimagine and Restart.

**Mr. Sudhanshu Naithani** talked about how a ‘one size fits all’ cannot be followed by all



businesses when it comes to digitalising a company’s operations. He also highlighted that India is a country where a large number of the population does not have money for discretionary spending and therefore industries supplying essential goods are of much higher importance as compared to other industries like leisure travel, hospitality industry and so on.

Further, he talked about learning, unlearning, and relearning and how it is really important to ‘unlearn’ as it helps us to be more open minded once we learn to unlearn. It is however also crucial that we combine both formal and informal learning methods in order to get the most efficient output. Large companies and corporations are now also committing themselves to reskilling because they know that they will become irrelevant if they fail to

offer digital services and change according to the changing business environment and consumer's needs.

In the end, the speakers talked about embedding cultural aspects like resilience, fairness, reliability, respect, transparency, ethics and accountability in our technology and how we should have the ability to leverage tools and build skills to get the return on investment (ROI) from the data that we have collected over the years. They also highlighted that these skills are not related to the pandemic and we have to build them anyway; the pandemic has simply made it important for us to build them faster.

### **Sustaining SMEs**

The session was held on July 30, 2020 and moderated by Ms. Vikas Goswami (Head of Consulting, Boundless Environment Resources Solutions Pvt. Ltd). She gave out an overview of the session “Sustaining SMEs” and shared that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial and dynamic role in growth of the Global economy, particularly in developing countries. It represents 90% of the business globally and more than 50% employment worldwide. They are not only one of the bigger employers in the economy but also assist in industrialization of rural & backward areas. With their socio-economic contribution they have undoubtedly become the backbone of the global economy. It is no surprising fact that the SMEs are one of the most adversely affected parts of the economy. While the governments across the globe have been doling out financial packages and schemes, there are still questions to be answered and discussions to be had. The challenges faced will be on the front of cash-flow/liquidity, labour, documentation, maintenance of sanitation and social distancing in the event of opening.



Giving and introduction of SMEs, she said that the panelists will have discussions around the issues of “Sustaining SMEs” which will be the most impacted sector of the economy, post the pandemic. In the panel we will also have discussions around the challenges faced by the SME sector and the best practices and solutions that can be worked upon.

### **The Panelists of the session**

- Mr. Thorsten Kötschau, CEO, German-Colombian Chamber of Commerce, and Industry.

- Mr. Vineet Aggarwal, Executive Director, Supply Chain Management, Engineers India Limited.
- Ms. Ayotola Jagun, Chief Compliance Officer and Company Secretary, Oando PLC.
- Mr. Ashwini Saxena, CEO, JSW Foundation.

**Mr. Ashwini Saxena** shared that Small and Medium Enterprises (SMEs) play a crucial and dynamic role in the growth of the Global economy over the last few decades, particularly in developing countries. It represents 90% of the business globally and more than 50% of employment worldwide. He emphasised on how the SMEs have been the engines of growth in the global economy and with little support from all the sectors will help their resurgence and resilience.



**Mr. Vineet Aggarwal** mentioned that while the private sector has a pivotal role to play in overcoming the crises with its innovative solutions, SME is also a sector fully affected by the crises. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the self-employed, and the informal sector are particularly vulnerable. He highlighted the fact that the MSMEs are the biggest employers and how any impact on them has effect not only on economy but on social and political fabric of a nation as well.



**Ms. Ayotola Jagun** said that given the clampdown on economic activity with lockdowns in place, it is unquestionable that a vast number of these units will be choked, possibly to the point of perpetual closure. MSMEs contribute nearly 30 percent of India's gross domestic product and close to half of the country's total exports. She acknowledged the role of SMEs and how they were impacted by the limited resources to absorb the shocks caused by the pandemic and the important role that will play in the recovery of the economic system. She said that collective efforts are required to ensure emergence and sustainability of SMEs as vehicles of innovation, competition, job creation and economic development.



**Mr. Thorsten** mentioned while the governments across the globe have been doling out



financial packages and schemes, there are still questions to be answered and discussions to be held. The challenges faced will be on the front of cash-flow/liquidity, labour, documentation, maintenance of sanitation, and social distancing in the event of opening of the economic activities and unlocking measures. Also,

he spoke of the important role of governments in offering quick and effective support to the SMEs in the times of constant and rapid changes without red tape.

### **Learnings and way forward**

- ✚ With the rising impact of Covid -19 being seen worldwide, all industries are facing significant disruption to their supply chain, workforce and cashflow. By remaining agile and alert, business leaders can take steps to build resilience into their operations and mitigate the impact.
- ✚ No nation has escaped widespread disruption from the COVID-19 pandemic, but some have fared better than others with their strong ethical business practices and strategies.
- ✚ The private sector has a pivotal role to play in overcoming the crises with its innovative solutions, the sector itself is fully affected by the crisis. Small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs), the self-employed, and the informal sector are particularly vulnerable.
- ✚ Supply chain is one of the areas most affected by COVID-19, especially in the manufacturing sector. It will be critical to stabilize the supply chain for business continuity and to support global communities. There is a need to shape business to fight Covid 19.
- ✚ Interactive Digital engagement and working culture is essential. Not only can it support productivity and minimize feelings of isolation, but it will also help us all reduce the spread of COVID-19.
- ✚ While various forms of disruption can be found almost everywhere, there are common themes. Businesses will need to explore new ways of working, refine their

supply chains, adapt to unprecedented and novel demands, and – all the while maintaining sustainable models and protect cash flow as the situation develops.

- ✚ Resilient organisation is an organisation that does not go back to where it started before the crisis but it is an organisation that has transformed and built attitudes, beliefs, agility and structure to be able to jump forward quickly”
- ✚ We must turn the present times into an opportunity and become more efficient and focused for becoming resilient
- ✚ If we want society to be resilient, then we must look at all the SDGs since they are all interconnected.
- ✚ To grapple with upheaval caused due to Covid-19, it's time we rethink how top management can empower the employees to upskill and relearn the skills to stay relevant.
- ✚ Our focus is to provide businesses and their employees with tools that help them overcome the sudden challenges that arose with the pandemic: telecommuting, digital transformations, innovation, resilience and other soft skills are needed to succeed in this new normal.
- ✚ Learning ‘how to learn’ is the key for businesses to be reskilled and digitalized.

### Striking features

- ✚ Speakers were from Europe, Asia, Africa and Latin America who represented all the relevant stakeholders including companies, business associations, international organizations, civil society organizations and public sector representatives.
- ✚ The series was very well received with over 600 participants from more than 12 countries.
- ✚ Feedback was collected from the participants, which provided a lot of insight for developing a way forward for businesses to shape a sustainable model post Covid.
- ✚ The discussion between the speakers and the audiences provided a lot of knowledge, ideas and best practices which will eventually be shaped in a roadmap for assessing business uncertainty and addressing the challenges through innovative solutions to deal with Covid19 pandemic.