**Partners for Transparency Intervention on Investing in Sustainable Recovery, Promoting Gender Equality and Strengthening Partnerships**

**Towards the Convening of a Renewed Meeting based on Human Rights**

**Preamble**

As we enter the third year of the COVID-19 pandemic, it has become quite clear that this is a crisis of massive proportions with catastrophic effects on people's lives and livelihoods and on the efforts to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development. The global community is at a critical stage in its pursuit of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) after more than a year since the spread of the global pandemic. Millions of lives were lost, the human and economic losses were unprecedented, and the recovery efforts so far have been uneven, inequitable and insufficiently directed towards achieving SDGs. The current crisis also threatens decades of development gains, further delaying the urgent transition to greener and more inclusive economies and further off-track progress in achieving SDGs.

Since human rights were and still are the most affected in times of natural disasters, wars, conflicts and various emergencies throughout history and with the emerging coronavirus (COVID-19), there is a need for a rapid response to this pandemic that threatens the lives and safety of individuals and even human security in the country. This virus continued to spread after it was agreed that social distancing is the most appropriate way to prevent its spread, prompting the authorities in many countries to impose quarantine, which caused disruptions in the economic, social and political system of countries.

Therefore, the fourth intersessional meeting was an opportunity to highlight good practices and discuss recommendations for gender-transformative and human rights-based recovery efforts from the COVID-19 pandemic. Accordingly, P**artners for Transparency Organization (Egypt)** presents this intervention to clarify its comments on the challenges imposed by the outbreak of the Coronavirus pandemic on achieving SDG 5 and SDG 17 as one of the main axes on which this meeting is based.

**Coronavirus’s challenges to achieving SDG 5 & SDG 17**

As the pandemic continues to spread, there are some important challenges imposed by the Coronavirus pandemic in many areas related to the realization of SDG 5 7 SDG 17.

* **With regard to SDG 5:**

SDG 5 is concerned with achieving gender equality and empowering all women and girls. However, during the periods of closure measures that were taken to undermine the spread of the Coronavirus in 2020 and 2021, there was a decline in such goal in a number of manifestations. The United Nations statistics confirmed:

* **Increasing domestic violence**: The closure measures in 40 countries to undermine the spread of COVID-19 led to increasing rates of domestic violence. The recorded and announced incidents by the media during the months of the pandemic’s spread in different countries, such as China, the United States of America, the United Kingdom and others, indicate notable high rates of domestic violence, in addition to high rates of distress calls from victims of domestic violence and requests for shelter services. In France, for example, the police reported an increase in the number of reports submitted regarding domestic violence in 2020 by about 30% compared to 2019. Furthermore, the number of distress calls to the hotline for the protection of women and children in Spain increased by about 18%, in addition to an increase in the number of domestic violence reports In the US, particularly during the first months of the pandemic. In China, the police forces provided no protection for women, despite the widespread domestic violence crimes and the state’s establishment of protective frameworks for women, including procedures for arresting trespassers and early mandatory intervention[[1]](#footnote-1).

The pandemic has also exacerbated the burden of women's unpaid workload, as women spend about 2.5 times the number of hours that men spend on unpaid housework and care work. The pandemic has also exacerbated gender inequality, with a decline in women’s empowerment rates in many countries. In January 2021, female political representation was far from equal, the global average of female representation in national parliaments was only 25.6%, which means that the world needs 40 years to achieve gender parity.

Women also suffered a disproportionate share of job losses and an increase in domestic care work. The pandemic has highlighted the need to act quickly to address the dominant gender inequalities in the whole world. Moreover, although more than 90% of the world's countries imposed and approved the principles of non-discrimination at work, nearly half of the countries prevent women from working in certain jobs[[2]](#footnote-2).

* **With regard to SDG 17:**

SDGs can only be realized through a solid commitment to partnership and cooperation at the international level. Although the official development assistance provided by developed countries increased by 66% between 2000 and 2014, humanitarian crises caused by conflict or natural disasters still require more resources and financial aid. Several countries also need official development assistance to encourage growth and trade[[3]](#footnote-3).

On the positive side, despite the health risks caused by the outbreak of COVID-19, the global efforts to emerge from this pandemic crisis provided an opportunity to strengthen positive international partnerships in order to build a safe, sustainable, healthier and safer world. These efforts also stressed the importance of strengthening cooperation and partnership between the world's governments and organizations and the private sector in shaping the future[[4]](#footnote-4). With a view to mitigate the spread of the pandemic, for example, the US government provided Morocco with $670,000 from the Emergency Reserve Fund for Contagious Infectious Diseases and the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan. The US support for Morocco and other partner countries has helped prepare their testing laboratories at a large scale, implement an effective public health emergency plan, activate case-finding and event-based monitoring for influenza, train and equip rapid response teams, investigate cases and trace contacts of infected people, in addition to adapting training materials for health personnel to address the Coronavirus[[5]](#footnote-5).

The importance of partnerships as one of the SDGs emerged in the donor conference’s pledge to provide 8 billion dollars to develop a vaccine and treatments for the Corona virus. Germany, Saudi Arabia and Canada were the first countries to provide donations[[6]](#footnote-6).

Hence, reinvigorating the global partnership for the development goal embodied in SDG 17 implies a common vision shared by countries and local communities on sustainable development and a strong commitment to providing technological and financial means to translate this vision into a reality and provide assistance to countries that suffer from the scourge of war and conflict[[7]](#footnote-7).

However, in this regard, the COVID-19 pandemic has negatively affected the donor pledges for a number of humanitarian crises. Donors’ pledges to Yemen in conferences held in the past two years witnessed a decline in amount of funds announced by participants. This decline in donors’ pledges for humanitarian response In Yemen is due to the global economic conditions resulting from the Corona pandemic, which is shown in the number of pledges that does not exceed half of what is required for the humanitarian response. The donors' conference, co-hosted by Sweden and Switzerland to support Yemen on March 1, 2021, failed to raise $3.85 billion for humanitarian operations, the amount that the United Nations had sought to raise. The donors announced pledges of only $1.77 billion and Saudi Arabia was the largest donor with $430 million. Moreover, the 2020 conference, organized by Saudi Arabia, failed to raise 2.41 billion dollars to cover the costs of humanitarian aid and address the Coronavirus in Yemen. Donors pledged only 1.3 billion dollars. However, in mid-2020, the United Nations announced that it had received only half of the announced amount[[8]](#footnote-8).

In addition to the importance of international alliances and partnerships, diversifying such partnerships remains a strategic necessity in light of the changing international equations and centers of power. The Corona crisis was a real test of the principle of solidarity upon which international alliances and partnerships are based, which means that these blocs may undergo transitions following this crisis. Despite the nature of the international system that will result from the Corona crisis, those who manage to manage such crisis will shape the features of that system.

**Therefore, one can say that** the United Nations is committed to supporting all governments and working with their partners to ensure that lives are saved first and foremost, livelihoods are restored and that the global economy and people emerge from this crisis. The world needs solidarity, hope, political will and cooperation now more than ever to address the crisis as well as a decisive, urgent and coordinated action by all leaders of countries, companies, financers, scientists and communities to prevent the spread of the virus as quickly as possible and to stop the pandemic. Accordingly, Partners for Transparency Organization recommends the following:

* The need to work on reshaping and re-establishing the systems, laws, policies and institutions to advance gender equality.
* Public policies should aim at empowering women in a real and just manner in order to provide opportunities for their financial and social independence if they are ever subjected to violence.
* The need to encourage the expansion of the capital of funds, such as the UN Women's Peace and Humanitarian Fund or the UN Trust Fund to End Violence Against Women as a way to increase support.
* The need to reinvigorate partnerships and commit to international cooperation in the face of crises, especially in humanitarian aid.
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2. اهداف التنمية المستدامة خلال 2021، الامم المتحدة، الرابط، <https://unstats.un.org/sdgs/report/2021/The-Sustainable-Development-Goals-Report-2021_Arabic.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. الهدف السابع عشر: عقد الشراكات لتحقيق الاهداف، برنامج الأمم المتحدة الإنمائي في الدول العربية، الرابط، <https://www.arabstates.undp.org/content/rbas/ar/home/sustainable-development-goals/goal-17-partnerships-for-the-goals.html>. [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. غوتيريش: أزمة كورونا فرصة لتعزيز الشراكات الدولية الإيجابية، الشرق الأوسط، 26 أكتوبر 2020، الرابط، <https://bit.ly/3nsZMDl> [↑](#footnote-ref-4)
5. رهانات التعاون الدولي في ظل ازمة كورونا، المعهد المصري للدراسات، 17 ابريل 2020، الرابط، <https://bit.ly/3Ga3Ijl> [↑](#footnote-ref-5)
6. - مؤتمر المانحين: 8 مليارات دولار لتطوير لقاح ضد كورونا، موقع DW عربي، 4 مايو 2020، الرابط، <https://bit.ly/3K2WEaS> [↑](#footnote-ref-6)
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8. تراجع تعهدات المانحين لليمن.. كورونا أم فساد المنظمات؟، اندبندنت عربية، 7 مارس 2021، الرابط، <https://bit.ly/33bk4dd> [↑](#footnote-ref-8)