

# Sustainability and Resilience: The World Post-COVID-19 and the Role of Technology

27<sup>th</sup> May 2020

10:00 CET | 16:00 Beijing | 17:00 Tokyo

Presentation deck and summary of the webinar



# Introduction

---

During the outbreak of COVID-19, there have been many conversations, webinars, and convenings on how the world is changing and how we are adapting. In this webinar, we looked more long term and with a panel of eminent experts, we explored how society can make sustainability the cornerstone of the “new normal” and develop a system that values resilience as being fundamental in a changing world.

The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) are a collection of 17 global goals set by the United Nations General Assembly in 2015. The goals are broad and interdependent, yet each has a separate list of targets to achieve. Achieving all 169 targets would signal the accomplishment of all 17 goals, which cover a wide range of social and economic development issues.

The SDGs represent issues that the global community need to address to make the world a better place for its current and future inhabitants and everyone has a part to play.

These goals can only be achieved by collaboration, which is why, in May 2020, we brought together an eminent list of speakers for a webinar to explore how we can rebuild a better world post-COVID-19 and to discuss these ideas with a global audience of stakeholders.

Prior to the webinar, we conducted a short survey in order to inform the agenda by identifying the key challenges, opportunities, and ways we can leverage technology to arrive at a more resilient world and achieve the SDGs.

You can find the recording of the full webinar here:  
<https://globescan.com/sustainability-resilience-technology-world-post-covid19/>

This report highlights the results of the survey and the areas of discussion and outcomes of the webinar which we hope will further contribute to a more sustainable world.



# Topics Discussed

## ▶ Sustainability and Resilience: The World Post-COVID-19 and the Role of Technology

- The impact of COVID-19 on the global economy
- The ways in which businesses and society are responding to the emerging new reality, viewed through a lens of sustainability, particularly the SDG framework
- The role of technology in the new normal after COVID-19

### Moderators:

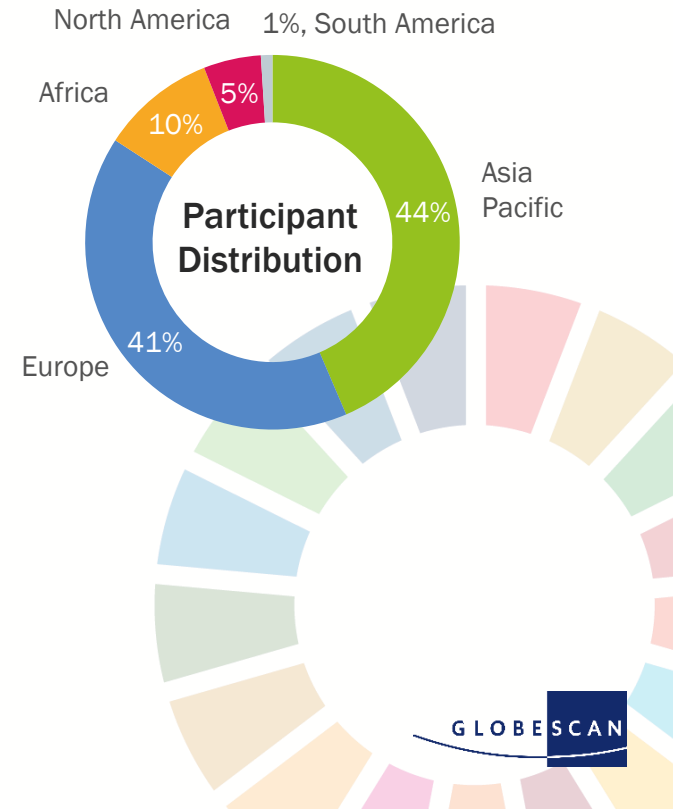


**Perrine Bouhana**  
Director, Paris  
GlobeScan



**Wander Meijer**  
Director, Asia Pacific  
GlobeScan

The webinar had 700+ registrants, coming from 70 different countries:



# Speakers and Panellists

---



**Catherine Chen**  
Corporate Senior Vice President,  
Director of the Board  
**Huawei**



**Lukas Mandl**  
Member  
**The European Parliament**



**Kazuhiko Shigetoku**  
Member  
**The House of Representatives of  
the National Assembly of Japan**



**Dr. Harriet Groom**  
Honorary Research Fellow  
**Department of Medicine,  
University of Cambridge**



**Anne Marie Engtoft Larsen**  
Lead, Fourth Industrial Revolution  
**World Economic Forum**



**Gerbrand Haverkamp**  
Executive Director  
**World Benchmarking Alliance**



**Federico Bonaglia**  
Deputy Director  
**OECD Development Centre**



# The Current Situation – May 2020

---

**Catherine Chen, Huawei – China:** When experiencing the current COVID-19 crisis, many people may remember the SARS situation 17 years ago. Advances in technology made in the intervening years have allowed us to respond to global crises such as this more efficiently. In 2003, it took the world nearly four months to sequence the SARS genome. This year, it took only a week to decode COVID-19's genome, thanks to high-throughput DNA sequencing technologies.

New technologies have made healthcare more effective, with new approaches such as remote consultation, mobile ward rounds, and infrared body-temperature monitoring. Still, technology alone cannot take on COVID-19. In the modern world, we have fantastic communications network coverage, but yet, nearly half of the world's population is still offline, and some 1 billion people have no mobile broadband coverage, and this has to be one of our priorities going forward.

**Lukas Mandl, MEP European Union:** An important lesson learned from COVID-19 is that Europe needs a faster response rate and be better preparation for possible crises. It needs strategic autonomy and to become a stronger partner to the world – to exchange, provide, and produce. Another priority for Europe should be to trigger private investment on education and better share innovation.

Strategic autonomy from a security and defensive perspective is a key term even before the pandemic. It is hard to predict what will happen in future crises. Supplies are not enough. You don't know who is able to

help you or who will be your partner. That's why it is important to be autonomous – not to create new borders but to be able to help oneself and be a reliable partner to other parts of the world.

**Kazuhiko Shigetoku, Member of Japanese Parliament:** When we look at the measures taken by the Japanese government to counter COVID-19, it is clear that their response to the outbreak was too slow. In the case of the Diamond Princess, a cruise ship with 3,700 passengers that experienced an outbreak of COVID-19 while in Japanese waters, thousands of people were trapped in cabins for weeks and testing was slow. The extensive close contact resulted in increased infection rates, and ultimately, 14 deaths.

By the end of February, the government had closed all elementary, junior, and secondary schools. Family lives had become chaotic, as people were still required to go to work, but had to leave children at home. There has since been an increase in remote working using telecommunication. People no longer need to be in crowded traffic for several hours per day and can stay at home to work, with lower cost of commuting, and spend more time with family. Many people realize now that there is actually no longer a need to live near downtowns and train stations, but they could also live in suburbs, where houses are cheaper and there is no need to take trains for two or three hours per day. Japanese people are often called workaholics – but it is possible that their way of life will be changed as a result of this pandemic.

# Good Health and Well-being Viewed As Most Urgent Goal

**Question:** To create a more sustainable and resilient post-COVID-19 world, from your perspective, which three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do you think require the most urgent action? Please choose the three most urgent goals.

## Top Five SDGs Which Require the Most Urgent Action (Total Mentions, Respondents from Audience)

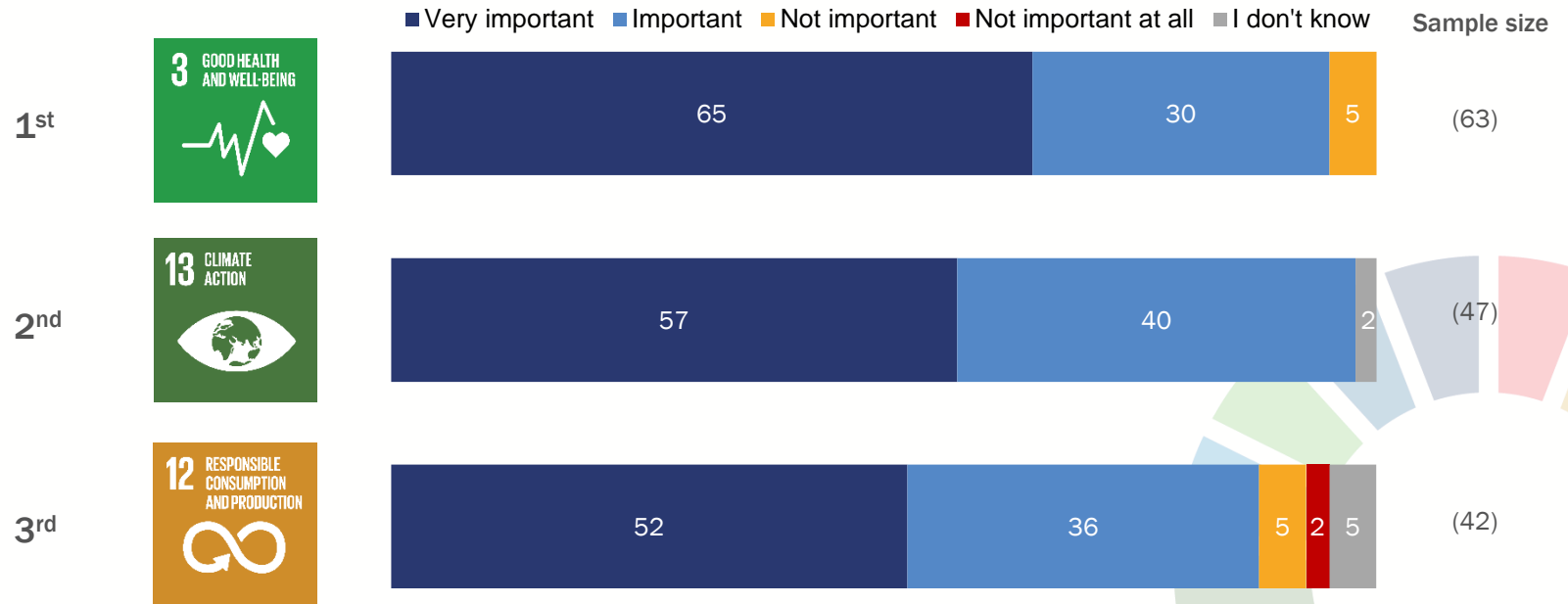


\*The 2019 ranking is extracted from The GlobeScan-Sustainability Survey published in 2019. It was a global survey of 454 qualified sustainability experts across 74 countries. The question was asked as “Which three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do you think require the most urgent action? Please choose at most three goals.”

# Technology Has An Important Role in Achieving the SDG Agenda

Question: How would you rate the importance of technology in achieving the three SDGs you selected in your country?

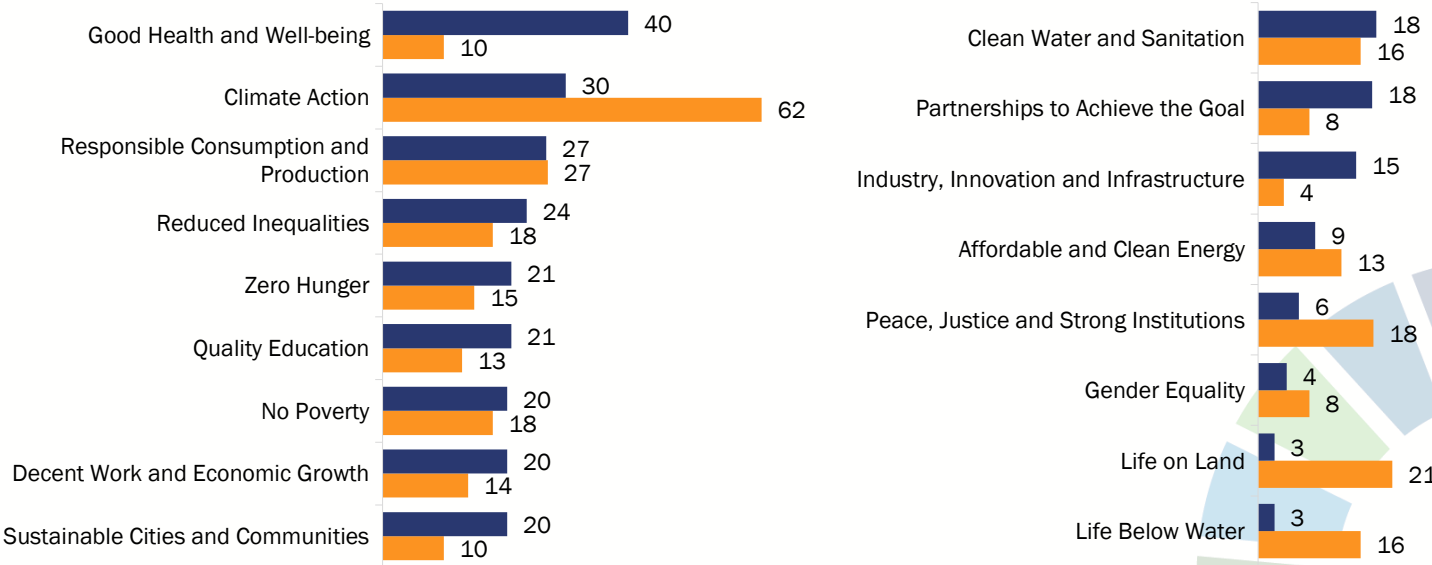
## Level of Importance of Technology to Achieve Top Three Most Urgent SDGs



# Good Health and Well-being Is the Most Urgent Goal

**Question:** To create a more sustainable and resilient post-COVID-19 world, from your perspective, which three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do you think require the most urgent action? Please choose the three most urgent goals.

**SDGs Which Require the Most Urgent Action (Total Mentions, Respondents from Audience)** ■ 2020 (n=162) ■ 2019\* (n=454)



\* The 2019 ranking is extracted from The GlobeScan-SustainAbility Survey published in 2019. It was a global survey of 454 qualified sustainability experts across 74 countries. The question was asked as “Which three Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) do you think require the most urgent action? Please choose at most three goals.”



# Technology for a More Resilient Future

**“How can technology help us to get this pandemic under control, help contributing to SDG 3 ‘Good Health and Well Being,’ and prevent future pandemics from happening?”**

**Harriet Groom:** This is really a cross discipline / cross sector challenge. We know a lot about viruses, but it is not very helpful without public health intervention, transport modelers, or industrial engineers, for example. The whole approach has to happen across borders. The SDGs are all interrelated; people who are more at risk of dying from the virus are also at risk from other aspects as well – access to clean water, bad sanitation, and exposure to other diseases.

**“How can we best leverage technology? Where is the best potential that we can hope for?”**

**Gerbrand Haverkamp:** The real lesson is that these SDGs are fundamentally interconnected. We have to look at the fundamental systemic changes that need to take place. These changes could be around our energy system, our food system, but also digital inclusion. When we look at resilience of societies, we start to understand, as policy makers and investors, the importance of technology as an enabler for all the developments – SDGs are enabled by access to technology, no matter if it relates to climate change, gender equality, human rights, and so on. The potential for 5G, 3D printing, etc. will bring massive benefits but we have to deal with the digital divide – 3 billion people who don’t use internet due to many barriers (lack of skills, access, etc.). During a lockdown, these people have no access to education. The digital divide mirrors the inequality that is evident in a

country or across the world. Technology is increasingly being seen as a utility, rather than merely attractive as it contributes to the public good. We expect a lot from technology companies – stock prices of tech companies will be expected to continue to rise – but “with great power comes great responsibility.” Expectations will come from society, individuals, government, investors, and jobseekers.

**“How to harness the 4th Industrial Revolution to achieve better and faster progress on emerging diseases?”**

**Anne Marie Engtoft Larsen:** The 4<sup>th</sup> Industrial Revolution is often about blockchain, AI, the internet of things, or droids and how they are transforming industries, consumption, and production. These technologies impact how we live our daily lives, the systems around us, and pose challenges as to how we make it inclusive and sustainable. We are now standing at the threshold of a new industry revolution – how can we re-imagine human and economic systems with the natural world?

**Key issues:** (1) Leave no one behind – despite the 3<sup>rd</sup> Industrial Revolution, more than half of world's population have no internet access. Despite the 2<sup>nd</sup> Industrial Revolution, 1.2 billion people don't have access to electricity. This time, we have to be inclusive and sustainable. (2) This time, it is not about technology alone but will require reshaping minds, incentives, mindsets, and collaboration. Now is the chance to pause the world for a while to do things completely differently. This is an opportunity for great transformation.

# SDGs in the Post-COVID-19 Future

**“If we look at the results of the survey among the audience, and compare these to a similar survey conducted a year ago, it seems that climate issues are getting less prominent – how can we make sure that climate is coming back to the forefront as an issue that we need to address, and how can we make sure that governments also address this issue in a post-COVID-19 world?”**

**Gerbrand Haverkamp:** Actually, I am not so worried about this. We are entering into recession, but the issues surrounding the climate will force themselves to the front again. The hurricane season will probably start very soon, and ESG investors are focused on climate change so I am not more or less worried than before COVID-19. With the European Green Deal, and Canadian Task Force on Climate-related Financial Disclosures, governments keep pointing to the right direction. The problem of climate change is simply too huge to allow it to take a backseat.

**Federico Bonaglia:** Technology can help the challenges of distance and connectivity. We need a table of different powers to sit down and discuss together. In 2020, the absolute number of poor people will increase for the first time. Technology has supported the efforts in reducing global poverty.

However, the global economy was basically stopped during lockdown, there was a 3 percent contraction of GDP this year. Every month of lockdown leads to a decline of 2 percent GDP in developed countries and 5 percent GDP in developing countries.

The SDGs are multi-dimensional. They encompass dimensions of people, prosperity, planet, peace, and partnerships. Partnership is fundamental; very promising partnerships are emerging in the area of health and in the area of education. Government alone is not enough. Almost half of the world's population live in remote and rural areas, but only 25 percent of the doctors' practice in those areas. There is a huge potential for mobile/distance health solutions.

**“And how we can make the Fourth Industrial Revolution more inclusive?”**

**Anne Marie Engtoft Larsen:** Automation is not an end in itself. It is a means to an end instead. So that we can do other tasks. This requires good governance and institutions of things. Thinking new ways of how work can be done. Home schooling, supporting local communities. A human-centred way is needed.

# Thank you

---

**GlobeScan** is an insights and strategy consultancy, focused on helping our clients build long-term trusting relationships with their stakeholders. Offering a suite of specialist research and advisory services, we partner with business, NGOs and governmental organizations to meet strategic objectives across reputation, sustainability and purpose.

Established in 1987, GlobeScan has offices in Cape Town, Hong Kong, London, Paris, San Francisco, São Paulo and Toronto, and is a signatory to the UN Global Compact and a Certified B Corporation.

**[www.globescan.com](http://www.globescan.com)**

**Contacts:**

- **Europe:** Perrine Bouhana, [perrine.bouhana@globescan.com](mailto:perrine.bouhana@globescan.com)
- **Asia or general:** Wander Meijer, [wander.meijer@globescan.com](mailto:wander.meijer@globescan.com)

