Scenarios and possible medium and long-term trends related to the recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic and the achievement of SDGs

The COVID-19 pandemic has challenged the global community in many ways, severely interrupting the positive progress made towards achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). In particular, the unequal response to the pandemic in different countries has also severely worsened global health, social and economic inequalities. These inequalities will only grow in the mid- to long-term if urgent and targeted action is not taken.

However, on a positive note, science and innovation has been propelled to the forefront in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The phenomenal scientific progress in the development of diagnostics, treatments, and new vaccines has demonstrated what can be achieved with the right resources, political will, and global cooperation. We must ensure that science and technology play a central role in informing global recovery strategies to a "new normal" in a post-COVID-19 world; one that tackles inequalities head on. The pandemic has provided an opportunity for us to "press reset" and reimagine the future of science and innovation as a democratic, open, and public enterprise that can tackle multiple global challenges at the same time.

Finally, what emerges next will depend on multiple factors, including the evolution of SARS-CoV-2, government responses, the level of global cooperation, ongoing progress in vaccine development and access, and citizen behaviour. Many actors still appear to be focused on short-term pandemic outcomes, but decisions made today will have an impact on long-term outcomes too.

To help prepare for these future challenges, the International Science Council, the World Health Organization and the United Nations Office for Disaster Risk Reduction have been coordinating an exercise to map out plausible global covid-19 scenarios in the next five years to enable the global community to plan for an optimistic and fair end to this pandemic.

International Science Council