

3rd Consultation report

Bouncing Forward Sustainably: Pathways to a post-COVID world Governance for Sustainability

Reinhard Mechler (mechler@iiasa.ac.at),
Anne-Sophie Stevance (Anne-Sophie.STEVANCE@council.science),
Teresa M. Deubelli (deubelli@iiasa.ac.at)

[23 September 2020]

Table of contents

Abstract.....	3
About the authors.....	4
Acknowledgments.....	4
Overview	6
Approach and framing.....	6
Summary of discussions: Lightning talk.....	6
BREAKOUT GROUPS	7
BREAKOUT GROUP 1: Global governance	7
BREAKOUT GROUP 2: National governance	8
Plenary discussion and next steps.....	9
Participants of the online consultation	10

© International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and International Science Council (ISC). For any reviews or commercial use please contact gomez@iiasa.ac.at

This background note has received only limited review. Views or opinions expressed herein do not necessarily represent those of IIASA, ISC or other organizations supporting the work.

Abstract

COVID-19 has once again brought the role of governments, and their ability to cooperate and coordinate their actions into the spotlight. It has however also highlighted significant gaps in various areas including the science-policy interface; the ability of institutional mechanisms to deal with crises; in the preparedness of global and national science communities and government systems; and in access to reliable, verifiable data to inform decision making.

The consultative meetings around this topic draw on lessons learned and experiences from the COVID-19 pandemic to identify effective policy tools and mechanisms that would also give due credence to issues of poverty alleviation, justice, inequalities, and the environment. The goal is to suggest pathways for more robust and responsive governance systems for an uncertain future.

This report gives a summary of the discussions in the third consultative meeting that took place online on 1 September 2020.

Building on the overall approach and the first and second consultations, the IIASA-ISC team engaged with experts to identify a set of policy options at global and national systems governance levels. The first consultation focused on drawing lessons from how COVID-19 has been governed at different levels of governance, while the second consultation focused on identifying options and opportunities for enhancing governance in support of realizing sustainability objectives. The third consultation further narrowed in on the options and opportunities suggested and harvested policy perspectives with a view to identifying their feasibility and steps needed for successfully translating recommendations and options into action.

About the authors

Reinhard Mechler is the Acting Director of the Risk and Resilience Program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) (Contact: mechler@iiasa.ac.at)

Anne-Sophie Stevance is a Senior Science Officer at the International Science Council (ISC) (Contact: Anne-Sophie.STEVANCE@council.science)

Teresa M. Deubelli is a researcher with the Risk and Resilience Program at the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) (Contact: deubelli@iiasa.ac.at)

Acknowledgments

The team would like to thank the Chair and all participants in the consultative meetings for their valuable contributions. The team also extends its gratitude to the moderators of the breakout groups, the leadership team, as well as the team assistants.

Report of the 3rd Consultation on Governance for Sustainability

Agenda (all CEST)

14:00-14:05	Welcome	Chair: Adebayo Olukoshi
14:05-14:10	Introduction and objectives	Flavia Schlegel and Leena Srivastava
14:10-14:15	Overview of the meeting	Teresa Deubelli
14.15 – 14:30	Reflections from the first and second consultation	Anne-Sophie Stevance
14:30-14:45	Lightning talk: <i>Scenarios for governance for sustainability in a post-Covid-19 world</i>	Reinhard Mechler
14:45-15:45	Breakout room discussions: <i>Options for enhanced governance in a changing climate – What works?</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Breakout Room 1: Global governance• Breakout Room 2: National and sub-national governance	Maria Ivanova and Gordon McBean
15:45-16:15	Plenary discussion <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Sharing results from groups 1 and 2• Synthesis: Selection of key options	Adebayo Olukoshi
16:15-16:30	Next steps and closing remarks	Reinhard Mechler

Overview

The third consultation on 'Governance for Sustainability' gathered 27 leading experts (12 external and 15 IIASA-ISC) from Africa, Asia, Europe, and Latin America.

Approach and framing

Building on the overall approach and the first and second consultation, the IIASA-ISC team engaged with the experts to identify a set of policy options at global and national systems governance levels. While the first consultation focused on drawing lessons from how COVID-19 has been governed at different levels of governance, the second consultation focused on identifying options and opportunities for enhancing governance in support of realizing sustainability objectives. The third consultation further narrowed in on the options and opportunities suggested in the second consultation, and harvested policy perspectives on them with a view to identifying their feasibility and steps needed for successfully translating them to action.

In addressing these questions, participants understand governance as the "totality of actors, rules, conventions, processes, and mechanisms concerned with how relevant...information is collected, analyzed and communicated, and how management decisions are taken"¹, and that it may take different shapes, such as polycentric, network, multilevel, monocentric, or adaptive governance.

Summary of discussions: Lightning talk

The lightning talk set the stage for the consultation, providing considerations and lines of thought for the discussions in the breakout groups where the focus moved towards putting the options for enhancing governance for sustainability developed in the preceding consultations to a feasibility check.

In his lightning talk, Dr. Reinhard Mechler of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) put the emerging options for enhancing governance for sustainability deliberated on in the previous consultation into perspective. He stressed that while there may be different pathways, the overarching ambition of transformations in governance regimes needs to be to arrive at two target spaces: the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and ultimately at socioeconomic sustainability within a stable earth system by 2050². Multiple stressors, including infectious diseases such as COVID-19 but also climate change, compound risk, socioeconomic pressures, and others, need to be considered as pathways towards more sustainable futures, with governance regimes playing a key role in enabling or hampering decision making in this direction.

Taking the consultation into the direction of reviewing suggested policy options for enhancing governance, Dr. Mechler introduced scenario-building approaches to the group. Exploring different narratives of the future, scenario planning supports policy changes in the face of (deep) uncertainty with internally consistent narratives that can be linked with quantitative modeling. Albeit not forecasting the future, scenario building enables

¹ IRGC (International Risk Governance Council). 2005. Risk governance: Towards an integrative approach. White Paper No. 1, O. Renn with an Annex by P. Graham. Geneva: IRGC.

² IIASA (International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis). 2020. The world in 2050. Twi2050.org

forward-looking exploration of different pathways towards designated future target spaces, and an understanding of the underlying factors that determine those futures. In turn, scenario planning enables policymakers to identify interventions that help shift towards sustainable futures in the long run, including in the governance sphere. He moved to introduce several exemplary scenarios, including conventional development, unequal futures, fragmented futures, and a sustainable future as the main target space, and challenged participants to cross-check and test the policy options developed in the prior two consultations against these scenarios to explore their feasibility and potential stumbling stones or enabling factors.

BREAKOUT GROUPS

In the breakout groups, participants were asked to provide their insights to review the pathways and options for enhancing governance for sustainability put forward in the second consultation, with a view to arriving at a selection of feasible policy options to be featured in the final report and presented at the upcoming side event on Transformations within reach, as part of the 75th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA)³.

In doing so, participants built on the findings and lessons emerging from the first and second consultations that included a need for more coordinated, cooperative, and solidarity-based global governance arrangements and for polycentric and adaptive governance structures at national and sub-national governance levels, along with an emphasis of accountable and transparent arrangements informed by reliable science-policy-society interfaces and a center-stage positioning of systemic resilience to bounce forward in sustainable development.

BREAKOUT GROUP 1: Global governance

The Global Governance group put options and opportunities for enhancing and harnessing global governance arrangements to a feasibility test. The key question guiding the conversation was how global governance arrangements need to be transformed at the global scale to shift development towards sustainable and resilient pathways in view of increasing compound and systemic risk, and how and to what extent that would be doable.

Participants in the global governance breakout group reviewed the options suggested for institutional reform, opportunities for building on conventions, and the current drive for their implementation, along with reviewing opportunities for leveraging process-related change potential. While there was wide acknowledgement of the challenges associated with getting institutional reform at global levels off the ground, participants gave high priority to global governance reform and suggested to leverage ongoing reform processes such as those surrounding the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF) and World Health Organization (WHO) reform. Similarly, there was great appreciation for the need to shift towards more radical narratives by harnessing the power of social media to boost risk communication and empower all members of society to put risk reduction to the center-stage away from a response-focus. Participants suggested that a global risk dialogue would be a critical first step in this direction. New technologies were also identified as an important step towards more effectively integrating expert and local insights into decision making and considered key for harnessing the opportunities provided by windows of opportunity presenting themselves as public opinion moves towards capturing the benefits of the SDGs and related global agreements.

³ See [here](#) for more details and a recording of the side event.

	Priority	Feasibility	Enablers	First steps
Shift towards a more radical narrative	Key	COVID-19 as the opportunity to demonstrate the systemic nature of risk even more than climate change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Whole-of-society risk management approach Harness power of social media to boost risk communication & empower all members of society: need to put prevention/disaster risk reduction back to the center-stage away from a response-focus 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Global risk dialogue that involves all stakeholders supported by informed insight
Institutions				
Create and innovate global human security/resilience council	2	Difficult to implement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing reform process surrounding SDGs, incl. at global governance levels (e.g. HLPF reform to be decided upon in 10/21 and likely WHO reform) Strategies of several UN organisations are showing there is an opening shaping up 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Educate all UN organizations about risks "What is it we need to do to manage risks & their underlying drivers?" as the connective element
SDGs-Council				
Empowerment of UN institutions such WHO/OCHA	3			
Conventions	4	Window of opportunity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Capture the benefits of the SDGs, UNFCCC et al. to align us in the way we pursue these goals 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Converge human and natural well-being decision-making arrangements
Turn towards implementation, e.g., UNFCCC				
Inclusion & engagement processes	2		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Impact of new technologies Understanding of the political and cultural context Ability to communicate in appropriate language/narrative (beyond GDP ...) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identify tools and processes to reach experts, businesses, locals, indigenous, Involve people at an individual level to global level in ways that are actionable
Experts' insights through ad-hoc advisory boards at global levels				

Figure 1. Summary of the discussions in the global governance breakout group

BREAKOUT GROUP 2: National governance

The National Governance group put options and opportunities for enhancing and harnessing national governance arrangements to a feasibility test. The key question guiding the conversation was how national governance arrangements need to be transformed to shift development towards sustainable and resilient pathways in view of increasing compound and systemic risk, and how and to what extent that would be doable.

Participants in the national governance breakout group reviewed the options suggested for shifting the focus on building forward towards a more cooperative new normal, to putting resilience center-stage, moving towards more evidence-based decision-making structures and lifting the role of non-governmental transformation agents. Among the suggested options, participants found that putting in place resilience officers that work closely with decision makers along with integrating resilience considerations into recovery packages was most feasible, while also agreeing that strengthening engagement processes for scientific and expert advice would be a sensible national governance enhancement to take forward. Other options, such as shifting cognitive concepts away from economic efficiency and growth-exclusive paradigms, were considered less feasible, albeit important for moving towards more sustainable futures. Overall, there was agreement that these options require political will and a long-term perspective, with participants appreciating the suggestion to crosscheck options and opportunities against the scenarios presented in the lightning talk.

	Priority	Feasibility	Enablers	First steps
Framings and cognitive concepts				
Beyond economic efficiency: Focus on building forward towards a new cooperative and resilient normal rather than building back old and non-inconclusive structures	2	low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Large inertia with regard to process and behaviours, Ongoing change in norms may lead the way Empathy stronger Listen to multiple voices 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Focus on long-term –maybe in conjunction with short-term (insulation of house for energy purposes) Revamp financial sector and markets to consider risk and resilience issues
Put systemic resilience centre-stage	2	medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need empowering and resources Broad awareness raising report are good 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Critical check-in on decision-making: who and how?
Introduce resilience offices at Centre of Government	4	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Just creating the institutions not enough, has to be managed in different way and wider perspective Need to build capacity with the next generation of young scientists and experts Appreciate 2nd best new normal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Link to 1st responders' offices Upgrade and make best responders throughout
Create roles for the informal economy with view to mitigating impacts	5			
Introduce multiple resilience dividends logic into decision-making	3	Low-medium	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Not trivial to include additional objectives into already multi-objective gov decision-making Staffing and coordination 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Standard operating procedures Agility of government decision-making to be increased
Multi-level decision-making to be upgraded				
Engage scientists' and experts' advice into decision-making (e.g., mapathons, hackathons, advisory councils)	3		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Create culture of science decision-making throughout society But also go beyond expertocracy 	
Integrate resilience and SDG transformation as agents into recovery packages	1	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Need empowering and resources 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Mapping national stimulus packages against the SDGs
Further roles for civil society, private sector and other players (incl. Science!) as transformation agents as transformation agents	4	high	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> High acceptance generally in many countries, but further communication and transparency necessary, 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Couple quick and hierarchical decision-making with further investment into horizontal engagement and building of trust

Figure 2. Summary of the discussions in the national governance breakout group

Plenary discussion and next steps

The plenary reported back from the break-out groups, providing an opportunity for reactions and commentary from all participants. Several participants made use of the opportunity to highlight the need and value of engaging decision makers at the right levels to drive implementation, and welcomed both the initiative and the upcoming report with a view to providing the right food for thought to this end.

With the third and final consultation completed, the IIASA-ISC team will continue to work on developing a final report coming out of the IIASA-ISC Consultative Science Platform “Bouncing Forward Sustainably: Pathways to a post-COVID World”. The insights from the third consultation, as well as from the prior two consultations have also fed into an interactive discussion on Transformations within reach, as part of the 75th United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) side events, organized in cooperation with the Permanent Missions of Norway and South Africa to the United Nations⁴.

⁴ See [here](#) for more details and a recording of the side event.

Participants of the online consultation

Chair:

Adebayo Olukoshi, Director for Africa and West Asia at the International Institute for Democracy and Electoral Assistance (International IDEA)

Participants:

Anita Breuer, Political Scientist and Senior Researcher, German Development Institute

Paula Caballero, Managing Director, Lands for Life & Former Senior Director, Global Practice for Environment & Natural Resources World Bank

Alma Cristal Hernández Mondragón, Science Director, Centros y Transferencia de Conocimiento Secretaría de Educación, Ciencia, Tecnología e Innovación

Teresa M. Deubelli, Researcher, Risk and Resilience, IIASA

Felix Dodds, Consultant, Stakeholder engagement in global sustainability processes

Steffen Fritz, Deputy Program Director of the Ecosystem Services and Management (ESM) Program, IIASA

Luis Gomez Echeverri, Emeritus Research Scholar, DDG for Science, IIASA

John Handmer, Senior Science Advisor, Risk and Resilience Program, IIASA

Stefan Hochrainer-Stigler, Senior Research Scholar, Risk and Resilience Program, IIASA

Jenan Irshaid, Researcher, Risk and Resilience Program, Water Program, IIASA

Maria Ivanova, Associate Professor, Director of Center for Governance & Sustainability; Director of the Global Environmental Governance Project at University of Massachusetts Boston

S.K. Joshi, Chief-Secretary to Government of Telangana, Chairman of Hyderabad Metro Rail Limited

Sunday Leonard, Programme Officer, Scientific and Technical Advisory Panel of the Global Environment Facility

Joanne Linnerooth Bayer, Emeritus Research Scholar, Risk and Resilience, IIASA

Gordon McBean, Professor Emeritus Department of Geography at Western University London

Reinhard Mechler, Acting Program Director, Risk and Resilience Program, IIASA

Emmanuelle Pinault, Head of City Diplomacy – Political Engagement C40

Michaela Rossini, Head of the Library and Knowledge Resources Unit, IIASA

Flavia Schlegel, Special Envoy for Science in Global Policy, ISC

Anna Scolobig, Associate, Risk and Resilience Program, IIASA

Thomas Schinko, Deputy Programme Director, Risk and Resilience, IIASA

Leena Srivastava, Deputy Director General for Science, IIASA

Sigrid Stagl, Socioeconomics Department Head, Co-Director Competence Center Sustainability Transformation and Responsibility, WU Wien

Anne-Sophie Stevance, Senior Science Officer, ISC

Ricardo Zapata-Marti, International Consultant

Caroline Zimm, Researcher, Transition to New Technologies, IIASA