



Proceedings of the AASSA-PAS Webinar I on Sub-Theme: SDGs and Pandemics

Irum Iqrar^{1,2}, and Zabta Khan Shinwari^{1,2}

¹Pakistan Academy of Sciences, Islamabad, Pakistan

²Quaid-i-Azam University, Islamabad, Pakistan

Pakistan Academy of Sciences (PAS) and the Association of Academies and Societies of Sciences in Asia (AASSA) with the support of InterAcademy Partnership (IAP) organized an AASSA-PAS Webinar I on “SDGs and Pandemics” on April 27, 2021, in the Pakistan Academy of Sciences. H.E. Senator Shibli Faraz, Federal Minister for Science and Technology inaugurated the Webinar.

Prof. Khalid Mahmood Khan, President Pakistan Academy of Sciences presented the welcome address. He emphasized the importance of media and sharing of data to counter the emerging pandemic potential. The Minister of Science & Technology, Senator H.E. Shibli Faraz appreciated the efforts of PAS, AASSA, and IAP for timely taking up the important issue of Pandemics. He inaugurated the webinar and mentioned that among the most pressing issues in preparing for the global response to a pandemic situation are the design, development, manufacture, and dissemination of vaccines. The response to this pandemic has shown that when leading vaccine manufacturers are fully engaged in a global response, it might be possible for them to manufacture substantial doses of vaccine on timelines faster than envisioned previously. Prof. Yoo Hang Kim (President AASSA) reiterated his support to the academies in Asia for holding such events and containing coronavirus in the region. There is a flood of information on COVID-19. But misinformation is, unfortunately, a big part of the problem we face in confronting the pandemic.

Under the sub-theme “SDGs and Pandemics”, experts from four countries (Turkey, UAE, Nepal, and Pakistan) shared their views. The speakers covered the themes of the role of collaborative efforts of Science academies in the preparedness of pandemics; the impact of Covid-19 on women and publishers and their role in facilitating the publishing and engaging scholarly community. Some other focus areas were:

- Dealing of Virus Infected Biological Samples using Modern Mass Spectrometry Tools: Hepatitis C Virus as an Example
- Tracking the pandemic in Sindh: From training and Capacity Building for COVID-19 testing to Exploring the Emerging Variants
- COVID-19 pandemic and other co-epidemics: a challenge for the overburdened healthcare system in developing countries
- COVID-19 pandemic as a test case in the anthropocene epoch; the interplay of environment, ethics, and psychology on the global stage
- Alternative Therapies for Pandemic Diseases using Herbal Drinks
- Artificial Intelligence and Predictive Survival Analysis for Covid-19
- Development of an Assessment Method for Investigating the Impact of Climate of Lahore on Confirmed Cases of COVID-19

The main recommendation from the webinar was on “Building the Global Vaccine Manufacturing Capacity” to respond to Pandemics” and equity issues of Low and Middle-Income Countries. A nationalistic rather than global approach to vaccine delivery is not only morally wrong but will also delay any return to a level of “normality” (including relaxed border controls) because no country can be safe until all countries are safe.

Way Forward

The organizer of the event, Prof. Zabta Khan Shinwari spoke about the way forward to combat COVID-19. He remarked that what emerges next will partly depend on the ongoing evolution of SARS-CoV-2, on the behavior of citizens, on the government's decisions about how to respond to the pandemic, on progress in vaccine development (its distribution, WTO regime, and IPR issue) and treatments, and also in a broader range of disciplines in the sciences and humanities that focus both on bringing this pandemic to an end and learning how to reduce the impacts of future zoonosis (focusing on One Health), and on the extent to which the international community can stand together in its efforts to control COVID-19. Many factors will determine the overall outcome of the pandemic.