



# DESA



## Global Policy Dialogue Series

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#### 'Technological and Science-based Solutions to the COVID-19 Challenge'

Thursday, 29 October 2020, 10:00-11:30 a.m. EDT

Zoom and UN DESA's Facebook page

#### [Speaker Biographies](#)

#### [Introductory remarks](#)



#### **Munir Akram, President of the UN Economic and Social Council**

His Excellency Munir Akram was elected seventy-sixth President of the Economic and Social Council on 23 July 2020. Ambassador Akram is currently the Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations in New York. Ambassador Akram assumed his position as Permanent Representative of Pakistan to the United Nations, with the rank of Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, on November 1, 2019.

Ambassador Munir Akram previously served as Pakistan's Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in New York for six years between 2002 and 2008, after serving as Ambassador and Permanent Representative to the United Nations in Geneva for seven years from 1995 to 2002. Between 1988 and 1992, Munir Akram was Pakistan's Ambassador to the European Council, Belgium and Luxemburg. He obtained a bachelor's degree in Law and a master's degree in Political Science from the University of Karachi. He is a prolific writer and has lectured and published several articles and papers on various strategic, political and economic issues.



**Liu Zhenmin, UN Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs**

UN Secretary-General António Guterres appointed Liu Zhenmin of China as the Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs effective 26 July 2017. Prior to his appointment, Mr. Liu was Vice-Minister for Foreign Affairs of China since 2013. Among his various diplomatic assignments, he served as Ambassador and Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of the People’s Republic of China to the United Nations Office at Geneva and Other International Organizations in Switzerland (2011-2013).

As Under-Secretary-General for Economic and Social Affairs, Mr. Liu guides UN Secretariat support for the follow-up processes of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including the High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development. He also oversees the substantive services to many intergovernmental processes, including the annual meetings of the Second and Third Committees of the General Assembly, the meetings of the Economic and Social Council, including its Development Cooperation Forum, and the work of the subsidiary bodies of ECOSOC. Mr. Liu holds a Master of Laws from the Law School of Peking University.

[Discussion 1: Using science-based decision-making to counter COVID-19](#)



**Tanya Lewis, Associate Editor, Health and Medicine, Scientific American (Moderator)**

Tanya Lewis is an associate editor covering health and medicine at Scientific American. Her previous roles include assistant news editor and associate editor at Scientific American MIND. She has also written for outlets including Business Insider, Wired, and Science News. She has a graduate degree in science communication from the University of California, Santa Cruz, and a B.S. in biomedical engineering from Brown University. She grew up on the Big Island of Hawaii, and is based in Brooklyn, New York.



**Susan Athey, Economics of Technology Professor at Stanford Graduate School of Business**

Susan Athey is the Economics of Technology Professor at Stanford Graduate School of Business. She received her bachelor's degree from Duke University and her PhD from Stanford, and she holds an honorary doctorate from Duke University. She previously taught at the economics departments at MIT, Stanford, and Harvard. Her current research focuses on incentives in organizations and marketplaces, economics of digitization, and the intersection of econometrics and machine learning.

She has worked on several application areas, including health technology, timber auctions, internet search, online advertising, the news media, and the application of digital technology for social impact. As one of the first “tech economists,” she served as consulting chief economist for Microsoft Corporation for six years, and now serves on the boards of Expedia, Lending Club, Rover, Turo, and Ripple, as well as non-profit Innovations for Poverty Action. She also serves as a long-term advisor to the British Columbia Ministry of Forests, helping architect and implement their auction-based pricing system. She is the founding director of the Golub Capital Social Impact Lab at Stanford GSB, and associate director of the Stanford Institute for Human-Centered Artificial Intelligence.



**Socorro Escalante, Coordinator, Essential Medicines and Health Technologies, Division of Health Systems and Services, World Health Organization Regional Office for the Western Pacific**

Socorro Escalante is currently the Coordinator for the programme on Essential Medicines and Health Technologies (EMT) and antimicrobial resistance (AMR) at the WHO-Western Pacific Regional Office. She leads a team to support countries strengthen their national medicines policies and pharmaceutical systems to improve access to medicines. She spent a substantial part of her career working at the local government level, on legislations, hospital management, service delivery and primary health care. Dr. Escalante joined WHO in 2006 working at the WHO Country Office in the Philippines, then in WHO Country Office in Viet Nam for eight years prior to moving to the Regional Office in 2017. During her work in WHO, she received various recognition such as the Medal for the People's Health and Recognition for Contribution to the Social Security given by the Minister of Health and Viet Nam Social Security respectively. She received the WHO Reward of Excellence from the WHO Director General in 2016. Dr. Escalante is a Doctor of Medicine with degrees in Law and Masters of Business Administration in Health.



**Paulo Gadelha, President, Fundação Oswaldo Cruz (Fiocruz), former member of the 10-Member Group of the UN Interagency Task Team on STI for the SDGs**

As the coordinator of the FIOCRUZ Strategy for the 2030 Agenda, Paulo Gadelha is in charge of promoting FIOCRUZ’s strategic engagement with the Agenda’s aspirational principles and goals. His background in technology includes studies of the application of technology in public health, healthcare models, and the history of science, technology and innovation. He is currently part of a group of 10 international experts to support the Technological Facilitation Mechanisms and the implementation of the United Nations Global Sustainable Development Goals (10-Member Group). Previously, he was FIOCRUZ President from 2009 to 2016, leading scientific achievements in biomedical sciences, the generation of scientific and technological knowledge, and the promotion of health and social development. Previously, he founded and directed the “Casa de Oswaldo Cruz”, a FIOCRUZ Institute dedicated to the sociology and history of science and health.

Gadelha served as a member of the National Health Council’s Science and Technology Intersectoral Commission. As President of the Brazilian Association of Collective Health, he chaired the 11th World Congress on Public Health. In cooperation with UN DESA, he headed FIOCRUZ’s efforts in organizing the first International Consultation on Science, Technology and Innovation in the implementation of the 2030 Agenda and its health-related goals in 2017.



**Houman Haddad, Chief of Emerging Technologies, World Food Programme**

Houman Haddad, CFA, is the Head of Emerging Technologies at the United Nations World Food Program (WFP). Houman is the founder of WFP’s “Building Blocks” (BB) project, which seeks to harness the power of blockchain to foster interagency collaboration and create efficiencies. Building Blocks is the world’s largest implementation of blockchain technology for humanitarian assistance, currently serving 700,000 Syrian and Rohingya refugees in Jordan and Bangladesh. Blockchain technology also has the potential to empower the vulnerable through financial inclusion and digital identities. Haddad joined WFP in 2010 and, prior to WFP, worked in Canada’s banking sector.



**Vaughan C. Turekian, Executive Director of the Policy and Global Affairs Division, National Academies of Sciences, Engineering and Medicine; member of the 10-Member Group of the UN Interagency Task Team on STI for the SDGs**

Vaughan C. Turekian has been Executive Director of Policy and Global Affairs at the National Academies of Sciences, Engineering, and Medicine since May 2018. Previously, Dr. Turekian served as the fifth Science and Technology Advisor to the U.S. Secretary of State. In this capacity, he advised the Secretary of State and other senior State Department officials on international environment, science, technology, and health matters affecting the foreign policy of the United States.

From 2016 to 2017, he served as a country co-chair, along with the Kenyan Ambassador to the United Nations, for the Multi-stakeholder Forum on Science, Technology, and Innovation for the Sustainable Development Goals, a high-level discussion at the United Nations designed to accelerate progress toward globally agreed upon development targets. In 2018, Dr. Turekian was appointed by the U.N. Secretary General as one of the ten international members to promote the role of science, technology, and innovation for achieving for the 17 SDGs. Previously, he was Chief International Officer for the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) and the Director of AAAS's Center for Science Diplomacy (2006 - 2015). As Editor-in-Chief of Science & Diplomacy, an online quarterly publication, he published original policy pieces that have served to inform international science policy recommendations. Dr. Turekian holds a B.S. in Geology and Geophysics and International Studies from Yale University and a M.S. and Ph.D. from the University of Virginia where he focused on the transport and chemistry of atmospheric aerosols in marine environments.

## [Discussion 2: Regional perspectives on harnessing technology to limit the worst effects of COVID-19](#)

### **Breakout session 1: Regional technological highlights (in English)**

**Buthaina Mohammed Al Kindi, Senior Executive, e-Transformation, Ministry of Transport, Communications and Information Technology, Sultanate of Oman; contributor to the *Compendium on Digital Governance Initiatives in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic***



**Victor Konde, Officer-in-charge, Green Economy, Innovation and Technology Section, UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA)**

Victor Konde is a Scientific Affairs Officer and the current Officer-in-Charge, Green Economy, Innovation and Technology Section of the UN Economic Commission for Africa (UNECA). He holds a PhD in Biochemistry (United Kingdom) and is a Post-Doctoral alumnus of Harvard University's Kennedy School of Government. He is the founder of the African Technology Development Forum (ATDF, Geneva, Switzerland), Managing Partner of ATDF Entrepreneurship Hub (Lusaka, Zambia) and co-founder of the Zambian Society for Biochemistry and Molecular Biology. He is a Fellow of the World Academy of Arts and Science, a reviewer of the SANBio (Pretoria, South Africa), technical advisor and trainers on innovation policies and innovation governance for Science Granting Council Project in Africa and the managing editor of the ATDF Journal.

Victor has more than 25 years of post-graduate work experience in the private and public sectors. He has developed and managed various institutional and country programmes, and seeded and overseen the development of firms. His current areas of interest and expertise include promotion of innovation and entrepreneurship policies and strategies, intellectual asset management, technology transfer, innovation funding models and development of business models, especially for youth.



**Nebojsa Nakicenovic, former Deputy Director General and CEO of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analysis (IIASA) and former member of the 10-Member Group of the UN Interagency Task Team on STI for the SDGs**

Nebojsa Nakicenovic is the Executive Director of [The World In 2050](#). He was the Deputy and Acting Director General of the International Institute for Applied Systems Analyses and tenured Professor of Energy Economics at Vienna Technology University. Among other positions, he is a member of the Earth League; Earth Commission of the Global Commons Alliance; the Multi-stakeholder Technical Group of Advisors on Sustainable Development Goal 7; Scientific Advisory Boards of the Potsdam Institute from Climate Impact Research; Fondazione Eni Enrico Mattei; Japanize Institute of Environmental Studies and of German Aerospace Center; Steering Committee of the Renewable Energy Policy Network for the 21st Century; Member of OMV Advisory Group on Sustainability; Board Member of the Austrian Climate Change Center; and Science, Technology and Innovation advisor to the government of Montenegro. He serves on the editorial boards of ten peer-reviewed scientific journals. Dr. Nakicenovic's research interests include the long-term patterns of technological change, economic development and response to climate change and the evolution of energy, mobility and digital technologies. Dr. Nakicenovic holds bachelors and master's degrees in economics and computer science from Princeton University and the University of Vienna, where he also completed his Ph.D. He also holds Honoris Causa Ph.D. degree in engineering from the Russian Academy of Sciences.



**Seong Ju Park, Deputy Director, Ministry of the Interior and Safety, Republic of Korea; contributor to the *Compendium on Digital Governance Initiatives in Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic***

Seong Ju Park has been working with governments and international organizations around the world to facilitate digital government innovation to build better digital society since joining the Ministry of the Interior and Safety (MOIS) for the Republic of Korea in 2016. She is in charge of multilateral cooperation on digital government, facilitating MOIS's cooperation with organizations including OECD, Digital Nations and UN DESA.



**Jonathan Wong, Chief of Technology and Innovation at the UN Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP)**

Jonathan Wong is the Chief of Technology and Innovation at the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP). He joined ESCAP from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), where he was the inaugural Head of Innovation. He has led the establishment of several high-profile innovation initiatives including the Global Innovation Fund, a partnership between the Omidyar Network and the governments of the US, UK, Sweden, Australia and South Africa.

He has extensive experience in social innovation and entrepreneurship, impact investing and technology. He also has substantial policy expertise on these agendas, having advised governments across Europe, Africa, Asia and the Pacific. Before joining DFID, he was a founding partner of a technology and innovation venture-capital fund and supported the establishment of the UK NHS Institute for Innovation and Improvement. Mr. Wong has also served on APEC's E-commerce Business Council, was awarded a Rockefeller Foundation Policy Fellowship, and is a World Economic Forum Schwab Fellow.

## **Breakout session 2: Technological and science-based solutions in Western Asia (in Arabic)**



**Moderator: Fouad Mrad, Senior Programme Manager, Technology for Development, UN Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia**

Fouad Mrad has been with the Technology for Development Division at UN-ESCWA in Beirut since 2010. He was the founding Executive Director of ESCWA regional Technology Centre in Jordan. Prior to that he was in academia, government, and industry.

Professor Mrad led a regional drive to establish and uplift national technology transfer networks and offices in several Arab countries. He is leading team efforts to pilot AI and Big Data projects for the effective delivery of the objectives of UN ESCWA with the member states (e.g. development needs of refugees and host communities, assessment of effectiveness of crises response policies). He is a passionate mentor for youth innovation in regional scientific competition for project prototyping and entrepreneurship aiming at cultural motivation of youth and positive empowerment.



**Ziad Abdallah, Central Administration for Statistics, Lebanon**

Dr. Ziad Abdallah has been a statistician and head of IT at the Central Administration of Statistics for Lebanon for the past twenty years. Dr. Abdallah has been responsible for many statistical projects, including the census of establishments and buildings (2002), the PAPFAM survey (2004), the Population and Housing Census in Palestinian Camps and Gatherings in Lebanon (2017), and most recently as head of consumer price index. He graduated from Ecole Nationale de la Statistique et de l'Analyse de l'Information (ENSAI) with a degree of engineering in statistics and is a holder of a PhD in IT from Beirut Arab University. He also has been Tutor in the Lebanese University since 1998, Beirut Arab University (BAU) since 2013, Institut des Sciences Appliquées et Economiques (ISAE) Associated Center of CNAM (Paris) since 1999, and Ecole Nationale d'Administration (ENA) Lebanon since 2009 and has taught many courses related to statistics, computer sciences, data science, and information systems.



**Ahlam Al-Rosan, Director of the Electronic Transformation and Information Technology Directorate, Department of Statistics, Jordan**

As Director of the Electronic Transformation and Information Technology Directorate in the Jordanian Department of Statistics (DOS), Ahlam Al-Rosan is responsible for six workstreams: programming and analysis; development and innovation; call centers; engineering and technical support; geographical information systems; and electronic publishing. These sections work to support and achieve the vision and

objectives of the DOS. She is currently responsible for the team developing an SDGs platform and designing a database compatible with SDMX tools to showcase progress in achieving sustainable development indicators and increasing the accuracy and reliability of DOS statistics.

She has undertaken various technical and management roles in the past 18 years with the Department. Previously served as Systems Developer, System Analyst and Head of the Programming and Analysis Section. Projects she has worked on include the population and housing census 2015 and the national statistical strategy 2018-2025.