

## Now. Bridge. Reboot. Thought Paper Series

# Leading through the chasm and into the future economy

## COVID-19's lesson for leaders



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Humanity is having an extraordinary shared experience; one of fear, pain, challenge, resolve, and resiliency. But, paradoxically, rather than sharing an important experience or event as we typically do—as a nation or community, gathering with friends and extended family—we are in a state of isolation, behind masks and shields, away from shuttered workplaces, in home lock downs, with event restrictions, travel bans, and closed borders. We find ourselves in a new world of bubbles hoping they protect us from the outbreak and reach out to each other in emails, Facetime chats, Facebook posts, Zoom meetings, and Twitter feeds.

As we turn inward in isolation, we face a common enemy. This virus knows no borders or bans. It sneaks past masks and physical workplace barriers. Protective measures did not stop the breakdown of global supply chains that produced shortages of products ranging from critical medical supplies to food. Firewalls did not stop the opportunistic increases in cyberattacks and malicious cyber activity as millions of workers worldwide shifted to telework. We explored these challenges as they unfolded around the world during eight GFCC COVID-19 webinars, in the hope of creating a cycle of rapid learning and application that could benefit GFCC members battling the virus.

COVID-19 will not be the last pandemic that sweeps the globe. The potential disruptions from global threats in food sup-

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ply, water, energy consumption, cybersecurity, natural resource depletion, and environmental degradation won't be contained in one place or another either.

Advanced technologies will drive additional disruption. They will help empower many of the world's most vulnerable populations by eliminating barriers to education, improving health, and bringing energy to power economic development. But, while technologies such as artificial intelligence and autonomous systems will bring growth and jobs to some nations, others may be behind. For example, increased intelligent automation could disrupt the pathways many emerging and developing economies have used

## About this paper

This paper is an outcome of the GFCC Now. Bridge. Reboot. conversation series ([conversations.thegfcc.org](http://conversations.thegfcc.org)), which featured business, research, policy and thought leaders from 30 countries in eight live dialogues on the lessons learned from the COVID-19 crisis and the trends emerging for the future economy.

We invited the participants of this dialogues series to reflect on the challenges and issues associated with leadership during the current crisis and in the world that we are seeing emerge out of it.

Learn more about the GFCC Now. Bridge. Reboot. conversation series at [conversations.thegfcc.org](http://conversations.thegfcc.org).

## Watch the conversation

Dylan Jones participated in the "Response and outcomes" conversation May 20. Watch the session on the [GFCC YouTube channel](#).

## The Global Federation of Competitiveness Councils

The GFCC is a global multi-stakeholder membership organization that has universities, corporations, government agencies and private sector industry organizations and councils as members. Combining its members and fellows, the GFCC has a footprint in more than 30 countries. Leaders and organizations in our network strive to advance innovation, productivity and prosperity in their nations, regions and cities.

To know more about the GFCC, visit our [website](#) or contact [info@thegfcc.org](mailto:info@thegfcc.org).

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to engage the global economy and ascend the economic development curve by providing lower skilled labor at lower cost. Without more inclusive prosperity, we will all face the risk of impacts from unrest, conflict, and global instability.

These are global challenges. As individuals, communities, and nations, we have a shared interest in human progress. And as leaders and agents of change in our own countries, we have a moral obligation to demonstrate good stewardship of the human condition. Global cooperation will enable us to better fulfill this responsibility, and that is the overarching principle guiding the GFCC. There is no better illustration of the benefits of global cooperation for social good than the dramatically accelerated accumulation of knowledge about COVID-19 made possible by global science teamwork.

The purpose of this short introduction is to recognize the challenges faced by our GFCC community during the pandemic and virus economy, and call attention to a declaration issued by a sister organization Horasis, founded by GFCC Distinguished Fellow Frank-Jurgen Richter. Through this declaration, global leaders made a *Commitment to Principled Leadership in Times of Disruption*. It frames five key commitments:

1. Promoting a culture of collaboration within and amongst societies, as well as between the public and private sectors.
2. Foregoing short-term, personal gains in favor of benefiting humankind and the planet in the long run.
3. Running our governments and organizations with openness, transparency, honesty, humility, and trust in others.
4. Championing the rights of all stakeholders, not just those of shared affiliations or mutual interests.
5. Actively investing in underserved communities to better address global inequality.

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We encourage you to explore the full text at [horasis.org/horasis-declaration-our-commitment-to-principled-leadership-in-times-of-disruption/](http://horasis.org/horasis-declaration-our-commitment-to-principled-leadership-in-times-of-disruption/), and join us in thinking about and acting on these principles.

In times of crisis, leaders are given an invitation. We are invited to bring all of our network, experience, and wisdom to the aid of our fellow citizens. We are invited not to shy away, but rather reach out and be our best selves. In the COVID pandemic, we have seen people around the world say yes to that invitation and rise selflessly to the challenge. They are role models for us all. But, we are given an even greater gift: The opportunity to leverage crisis to fashion a better world for the next generation. All of this turns on the quality, courage, and ethics of leadership.