

**HLPF 2020 Thematic Session: Protecting the planet and building resilience
(Protegiendo el planeta y construyendo resiliencia)**

*Wednesday, July 8th, 2020
14 – 15 hs (New York, Asuncion)*

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Good afternoon. Distinguished authorities, professors and participants.

The two sides of the crisis: opportunity and despair. The Ying and Yang of the pandemic.

In the Republic of Paraguay, the President of the Republic, Mario Abdo Benítez, with the Minister of Health coordinate the actions of the sector. We were the first country in MERCOSUR (Brazil, Argentina, Uruguay and Paraguay) to close the borders, adopt social distancing measures and implemented a lockdown that went from total to partial.

This helped us contain the spread of the virus in the community, while our health system was getting ready. The repatriation of Paraguayans from around the world is being implemented and the arriving individuals enter quarantine-shelters provided by the Government, and those returnees whose basic health or pre-existing conditions does not allow them to do so, quarantine in their homes monitored by the Government.

To date we have 2502 confirmed cases and 20 deaths due to covid-19 in the country. At the regional level, these data imply a low percentage of contagion (0.8%) with respect to the Paraguayan population.

The times of the pandemic show us two sides, despair and opportunity.

The quick broadcast of health news and statistics worldwide and the rapid confirmation of the presence of the virus in the region and in our country contributed to the former. Because of this, the Government took a position and

issued protection measures for the population that inexorably lead to the never before seen impacts on the population, on health, on the economy, on commerce, on education, on tourism, even in relations between countries, and in the social fabric, human relations, leading us to seek unthinkable solutions and explanations (total quarantine, limited movement, closings of formal and informal shops). All this implies a high degree of stress at a social and economic level.

On the other hand, the window of opportunity resulted in the readjustment of government mechanisms, redirecting of social programs to non-visible sectors, new forms of relationships with the private sector. Thus, it was also possible to discover new realities and the design and correction of development models, the opportunity to update health systems, the strong introduction of technology in distance education, in e-commerce, in management, at different levels of our daily lives.

If I may, I would like to make a reflection that should shake us up. This pandemic and the global stoppage should have contributed to a level of environmental regeneration, due to the reduction in the use of fossil fuels and the reduction of emissions, and the impact of which has yet to be determined, but it is encouraging, which should be capitalized in the protective measures for nature, reduction of global warming and application of mitigation measures for climate change.

As governments we must generate profound transformations looking for solutions and redefinitions protecting nature, and defining roadmaps based on tools such as strong public, social, financial, green and inclusive policies and investment that join together, even in this process of building, resilience for sustainability, seeking as objective the protection of peoples and communities as well as the environment.

We must also consider the pertinent care in of our countries' debt for recovery processes, which must be comprehensive enough to offer solutions to structural problems that have been exacerbated or have not been previously visible. In this sense, we should not miss the opportunity to be transparent and accountable in processes of what has been done and what has been implemented.

Beyond the intervention by countries at this time of the pandemic, today more than ever we must learn from each other, the regional authorities as sounding boards of good experiences.

The Sustainable Development Goals, the Paris Agreement and the Sendai Framework are today irreplaceable tools that affect new development models, the reduction of risks, and the impacts of climate change, with their observance, application and measurement, but also It is time to make contributions and provisions based on the experiences of our countries.

We are still in the process of learning and unlearning what must be taken very seriously so that it becomes the basis for future models of development and building resilience, protecting nature and a mitigation approach to climate change that generate well-being and full exercise of the rights of the communities.

From the Republic of Paraguay we advocate the prompt overcoming of this pandemic.

Aguije! (Thank you).