

NEWSLETTER

APRIL 2021



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Dear friends and partners of g7+, welcome to the first edition of the g7+ Newsletter in 2021. I would like to extend my best wishes for the year ahead and hope you and your loved ones are coping well with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic.

One year into the outbreak of COVID-19, life-saving vaccinations have been developed and being rolled out. However, many countries around the world are still struggling to contain the virus. The trend shows that countries that are affected by conflict and fragility will be left behind in accessing COVID-19 Vaccines.

In the spirit of human solidarity, the g7+ strongly supports WHO's call to ensure a rapid and fair access to COVID-19 vaccines for all countries through the establishment of COVAX. We urge developed countries to make the COVID-19 vaccine a public good for all countries, particularly for people who are living in countries that are in conflict and/or fragile. Our continuous call for concerted efforts to combat COVID-19 also highlights the need to support health institutions, economic recovery and debt relief and care for displaced people.



The g7+ group together with the Council of State Fragility launched a call to action on powering up energy investment in fragile states. The call to action was launched in a virtual event supported the International Growth Center (IGC) on 24 February 2021. Moderated by Jonathan Leape, Executive Director of IGC, the panelist included Mr. David Cameron, Former Prime Minister of UK, Ms. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of Liberia, Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, Prime Minister of Yemen, Dr. Francis Kai-Kai, Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone and Chair of g7+ and Ms. Namita Vikas, Founder & Managing Partner at auctus ESG LLP.

As of today, the call to action has been joined by current and former political leaders that include presidents of Afghanistan, Sierra Leone, Rwanda, prime ministers of Yemen and Sudan, heads of agencies, multilateral organizations and private sector.

Nearly 800 million people globally lack access to energy. More than 80% of them live in conflict affected countries. On the other hand access to renewable energy such as that from solar source has become cheaper due to improvement in technology. Fragile and conflict affected countries are rich in renewable sources. Despite lowering cost of renewable sources and abundance in these sources, fragile countries are home to energy poverty. Recognizing the plague in energy access gap in conflict affected countries, the concerted call to action aims at encouraging investment in energy sector by donors, government and private sector. Access to sustainable source of energy in conflict-affected countries is closely linked to sustaining peace and improving livelihood.

As we aspire to build back more resiliently post COVID-19, I am pleased to inform you that our collaboration with the Council on State Fragility in launching “a Call to Action on powering up energy investments in Fragile States” was a success. Access to electricity remains one of the biggest challenges in many g7+ countries. Having access to affordable energy is essential to provide the economic opportunities needed to lift people out of poverty and escape fragility. As of today, more than 15 Heads of State and organizations have signed up to the Call to Action.

On behalf of the g7+ Group, I would like to express my sincere appreciation to the Government of Finland for providing financial support to the operationalization of the g7+ work, in particular, promoting Fragile-to-Fragile Cooperation amid the pandemic. We look forward to strengthening our cooperation with other donors and development partners. Doing the right thing in the face of the global pandemic should not be optional. It is a moral duty to save humanity.

I hope you will find our newsletter useful and informative. Happy Reading!

Dr. Francis Mustapha Kai-Kai, Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone, and Chair of the g7+

Happy Independence Day of the g7+ members:

- Independence day of the Republic of Haiti, 01 January 1804
- Independence day of the Republic of Togo, 27 April 1960
- Independence day of the Republic of Sierra Leone, 27 April 1961
- Independence Day of the Democratic Republic of Timor-Leste, 20 May 2002
- Democratic Republic of Congo Independence Day – 30 June 1960

1. The G7 should make expanding energy access in fragile contexts a priority for the next year.
2. Development Financial Institutions (DFIs), which have crucial role in offsetting the associated risk, should scale up energy investments in fragile contexts.
3. Participation by the private sectors is pivotal in meeting the investment gap in access to renewable energy in fragile states.
4. Multilateral institutions such as MIGA (Multilateral Investment Guarantee Agency) should scale up access to instruments supporting investments in fragile contexts.
5. Governments of fragile states should develop regulatory frameworks to support energy investments and commit to transparency and the rule of law.
6. Improve collection and availability of data on energy investments in fragile states.

The event was an opportunity to launch the Call to Action: “Powering up Energy Investment in Fragile States”. The Call was to urge the private sector and aid agencies, who supported by development finance institutions (DFIs), to work closely with governments in conflict-affected countries to design financing mechanisms, regulatory frameworks and business models to support investment in renewable energy.

In his opening remarks, Mr Cameron said: “the event is the right initiative on the right time because large percentage of population stuck at fragile situation, 800 million of world populations have no connection with electricity while their state has lack of capacity to respond to their need, investing in renewable, distributed, and decentralised energy systems is cost-effective, practical, pro-poor, pro-green, and is particularly helpful in fragile states” He then added “Despite of everything been shadowed by COVID-19, however, this will be possible if all relevant partners can join hand and work together”

During the panel discussion, Mrs. Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Former President of Liberia; co-chair of the IGC’s Council on State Fragility, “recognized energy sector as an important sector that can contribute to the improvement of people’s life including in access to education and health” and calling for “the need of collective action among government and partners as well as private sectors because private sectors can bring capital to fragile states”

Reflecting the need for renewable energy in the country, Prime Minister of Yemen, Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed shared the challenges that his country faced particularly in the collapse of energy sector.

The country experience an immense suffer with many population have no access to electricity and to health services in their respective areas. Prime Minister also explained that the government plans to import solar panel and distribute to 133,000 household particularly in small community because of its low cost. However, Covid-19 has even made it even worse for his country. Therefore, he is calling for support from all relevant partners to support Yemen in bringing energy to its people.

Speaking on behalf of the g7+ group, Minister of Planning and Economic Development of Sierra Leone, Dr. Francis Mustapha Kai-Kai thanked all partners for the support to the call to action on energy and shared that President of Sierra Leone, H.E. Julius Maada Bio support to this initiative. He explained that lack of access to affordable energy is one of the main obstacles that limit the g7+ member countries to transform its potential into social and economic wellbeing of its people. Most of g7+ countries depended on importation of electricity, which is not only expensive but also contribute to the contamination of environment. He then described "Imagine the difficulty of curbing crisis of such as Covid-19 when hospitals are dark". Minister Kai-Kai reaffirmed the g7+ strong commitment to support energy investment that can help in ensuring everyone has access to energy and to unleash the potential of energy in fragile countries that finally can support each country to achieve the goals of reducing poverty, creating jobs, and ensuring lasting peace and stability.

Representing companies that deal with financing, Namita Vikas - Founder & Managing Partner at auctusESG LLP, talked about financial gap that exist in developing countries. She explained that about \$2.5 billion gap in energy sector for developing countries and only small amount that go to institutional transition. She added many private sector faced challenges in their investment particularly in dealing with rigid bureaucracy, quality of basic infrastructure and inability to respond to risk. She further explained that government as the regulatory body should respond effectively to demand and interest from multiple stakeholders. She called MIGA as an international financial institution to support government in providing risk insurance and guarantees to the Private Sectors.

At the Q&A Session, all panelists agreed that the government leadership is crucial in creating a good condition for a safe and long term investment and called International financial institution such as WB and ADB to support government programs and priorities.

The event was a success with nearly 200 people from 45 different countries including Germany, India, Guinea-Bissau, Sierra Leone, USA and Timor Leste who joined the meeting via zoom and another 500 more viewers joining via Facebook. The call to action also grab attention from media coverage included an interview with David Cameron, co-Chair of the Council of State Fragility, by Christiane Amanpour on CNN, the Guardian and BBC Newsday. Minister Francis Kai-Kai, Chair of the g7+ was interviewed by the CNBC Africa, Former President of Liberia, Ellen Johnson Sierleaf and Maeen Abdulmalik Saeed, Prime Minister of Yemen were also featured in the article written by Climate Home News, and an op-ed by the Council member Amat Al Alim Alsoswa on the National (UAE) online Newspaper.

A follow up Stakeholder's meeting was held on 18 March that brought together the representatives of signatories to brainstorm and explore areas of collaboration to realize the contents of the call to action.

More meetings and country level consultations will be organized in the coming months to realize the commitments made in the call to action. One of such meetings will be organized together with UNDP on 22 April 2021.

Secondary impact of COVID-19 on conflict affected countries; Joint assessment by the g7+ and UNDP:

The COVID-19 pandemic has meant more than a health crisis for in these countries with already weak institutions, fragile economy and peace. To assess the secondary impact of the pandemic in countries in fragile situation, the g7+ secretariat and the UNDP conducted a preliminary assessment of COVID-19 in conflict-affected countries.

The report was launched at the g7+ and UNDP Joint virtual event on 11 March 2021 with the theme "COVID-19 and crisis contexts one year on: What have we learnt? How can we fast-track recovery?" Moderated by Mark Eddo, the panelist of the launch event comprised of Haoliang Xu, Assistant Secretary General and Director of the Bureau of Policy and Programme of Support, UNDP, Abdul Habib Zadrán, Deputy Minister of Finance of Afghanistan and Deputy Chair of g7+, Kimura Tetsuya, Ambassador of Japan to the United Nations,

Hilde Hardeman, Head of EU, Foreign Policy Instruments and Zena Ali-Ahmad, Resident Representative UNDP Iraq.

The findings of the assessment are summarized in a paper that was launched in the margin of Development Dialogue of UNDP on 11 March 2021. It provides snapshots of the nexus between COVID-19 and the conflict across six OECD Dimensions of Fragility – Economic, Social, Human, Political, Security and Environments.

Following are some of the key findings of the assessment:

- GDP in Several conflict-affected countries are expected to decline twice if not three times the average, including Afghanistan, Iraq, and Somalia. Where vaccination in many countries will help in recovery, the same may not be as readily available to fragile and conflict-affected countries due to high cost and logistical considerations.
- Unemployment has disproportionately increased in several conflict-affected countries. With the extreme poverty already rising in fragile countries, 2 in 5 people expected to fall into extreme poverty by 2021 due to COVID-19 are living in fragile contexts. The rate at which extreme poverty is expected to increase in fragile contexts is twice that of non-fragile contexts. Female-headed families find it even more difficult to survive amid the imposed lockdowns.
- Remittances that forms a large part of many economies in fragile and conflict-affected contexts, has declined sharply. This has pushed even more people into poverty.
- There has been decline in domestic revenue due to the COVID-19 crisis. This is particularly true in resource rich countries due to decline in commodity prices globally.
- Food insecurity is rising in conflict-affected countries that is pushing vulnerable people towards chronic hunger Yemen, Burkina Faso, north-east Nigeria and South Sudan are at risk of famine. Most fragile countries are highly dependent on import of food items with Afghanistan on top, which will be affected as producers cut back on export.
- Domestic, sexual and gender-based violence is has risen in conflict-affected contexts that is partially due to stress caused by lockdowns. In some countries like South Sudan, girls are being forced into early marriages due to increased poverty.
- With the estimated 463 million children worldwide who are at risk of being left-behind due to their inability to access distance learning, children in in fragile countries are being especially vulnerable. On average, only 19 percent of the population has Internet access in fragile settings.

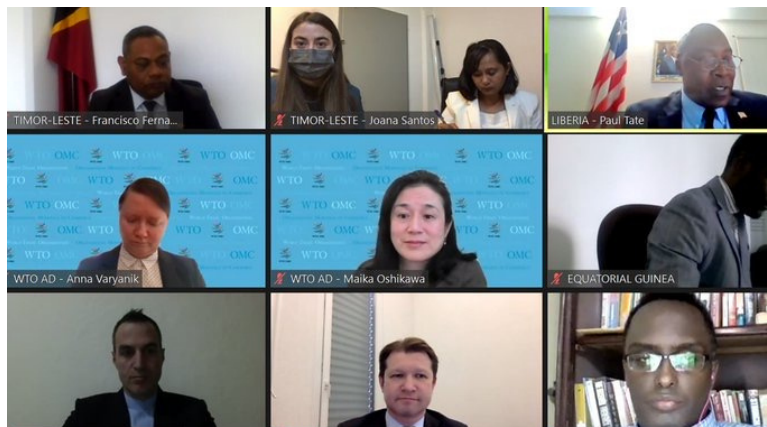
- Inequalities in fragile countries has further increased due to the COVID-19 crisis. Vulnerable people such as displaced and refugees are adversely affected by the restrictions.
- Globally, fragile settings risk being left behind as developed countries make deals to secure vaccines and invest in their own recovery. The gap in distribution of vaccines among countries is a major concern for global recovery and alarming for conflict-affected countries.
- COVID-19's impact appears to be influencing conflict dynamics. Although the incidence of violent conflict between states has decreased over the past ten years, intrastate violence between armed groups and the state reached its highest point last year. Some non-state armed groups have used the diversion of security forces to the pandemic to recruit and step up attacks and undermine the legitimacy of the state. Of the 10 settings most affected by terrorism, eight are fragile.

The paper is concluded with some recommendations to mitigate the impact of the pandemic in conflict affected countries. The recommendation includes pursuing ceasefire to end on going conflicts, more regional cooperation founded on solidarity, revival of commitment to the New Deal, fostering self-reliance in conflict affected countries, and ensuring that people in conflict affected countries have access to the COVID-19 vaccine.

Upcoming Events

- Scaling up green energy investments in crisis settings – 22 April 2021
- SIPRI FORUM: Promoting Peace in the Age of Compound Risk - 04 - 06 May 2021
- Decade of Acceleration: Unlocking the SDGs in Crisis Settings - 12 May 2021
- MAFRA Dialogue: Strategic Dialogue for Peace Diplomacy, is organized by IPDAL on 18 and 19 May 2021
- International Day of United Nations Peacekeepers – 29 May
- Natural Resources Conference, June, 2021

The world Trade system and conflict affected countries; g7+ aspiration and the new WTO leadership:



The institutional and economic fragility aside, most conflict-affected countries have been bestowed with natural potential. If realized, that potential (natural resources, strategic location and favorable climate) can guarantee sustaining peace, resilience and stability. One means and hope to realize that potential is trade. However, this depends on their ability to benefit from equitably from the global trade system. The g7+ WTO accession group was established with the same aspiration at the core of its mission.

Ms. Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala, the former Nigerian finance minister assumed the leadership of the World Trade Organization (WTO). She is the first woman and African leader of the WTO. Acclaimed for her achievements and passion, Ms. Ngozi's appointment as Director General of WTO is a hope for developing and least developed countries such as those in the g7+. In a congratulatory letter, the chair of g7+ expressed the group's aspiration and expectations of how equitable and fair trade policies can help achieve stability in fragile countries. The g7+ has committed to work in concerted partnership with the new leadership and help in reforming the work trade system that can become even more inclusive.

During the g7+ WTO accession group meeting, Mr. Habib Mayar, deputy general secretary of g7+ secretariat emphasized on consultation with the new leadership and sharing the perspective of conflict affected countries. He recommended documenting experiences of fragile countries and the challenges they face in promoting trade. In addition, the g7+ WTO accession group is an excellent platform that can harmonize the voice of conflict-affected countries in world trade system.

During the inaugural meeting of Trade for Peace, Dr. Helder Da Costa, general secretary of g7+ secretariat, expressed the group's willingness to work with the new leadership in reforming the WTO policies to become even more inclusive.

Emphasizing the nexus between trade and sustaining peace, he said that trade is the best alternative for conflict affected countries as aid resources are diminishing due to the economic shocks.

The g7+ secretariat and the WTO accession division will work to facilitate a meeting between the g7+ members and DG Ngozi in the coming weeks.

Fundraising for the victims of Flood in Timor-Leste amid COVID-19 Pandemic



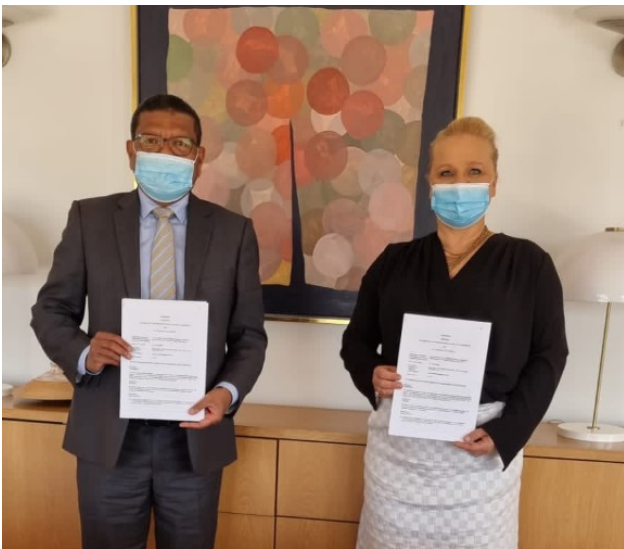
The g7+ family express our heartfelt condolences and solidarity with the government and people of Timor-Leste for the loss of precious lives and destruction caused by the recent massive flooding.

The flood happened while country is in the grip of new wave of COVID-19 infections after a year of keeping the virus under control. The flood and landslide have damaged infrastructure such as roads, bridges, internet connection, and water and sanitation system. Thousands have been displaced and more than 40 people died. The longer people have to stay in the refugee's camp, the higher the risk of a mass outbreak

The g7+ Secretariat Staff already started distributing relief packages to the affected families and we identify many more families with kids and newly born babies who are in the need of urgent help. We have set up an account to collect donation that can be deposited in the bank account with details as follow:

Bank Name: Bank Mandiri
Bank address: Avenia President Nicolau Lobato No. Colmera, Dili, Timor-Leste
Bank Contact: +67033177777
Account Title: Habib Ur Rehman Mayar
Account Number: 601-00-0100368-3
SWIFT Code: BMRIIDJA

Your help can save many lives of the people of Timor-Leste. Thank you and God Bless you.



FROM THE DESK OF THE GENERAL SECRETARY

Greeting to all readers! With the continued spreading of the pandemic has emphasized the need for a stronger collaboration across all development actors to fight against the COVID-19 Pandemic and ensure that the world can recover its economy.

At the Secretariat, we continue to call the attention for development partners and donor countries of the need of Fragile and Conflict Affected in accessing the COVID-19 Vaccines. Vaccines nationalism will lead the world nowhere. The secondary impacts of the pandemic are felt even worse in conflict-affected contexts, where they are hindering pathways to peace and development.

My sincere appreciation to the Government of Timor-Leste, Finland and the g7+ Foundation for its continued support to the operationalization of the g7+ Secretariat and huge thanks to our member states, stakeholders, partners and associates for their partnership and collaboration. Together we can make the difference in this uncertainty time.

Having successfully launched the Call to Action on Powering up Energy Investments in Fragile States in February, together with Council of State Fragility led by former UK Prime Minister David Cameron, the g7+ Secretariat is now partnering with the UNDP - as one of the signatories to the call, to organize a Scaling up green energy investments in crisis settings on 22 April 2021 to ensure renewable energy is a priority in a post covid-19 recovery approach. I invite you to join the virtual meeting by RSVP your participation at the UNDP Development Dialogues website.

The g7+ Secretariat was invited to participate in the virtual inaugural meeting of the trade for Peace Network on 25 March 2021 which was led by the new

DG of WTO, Madam Ngozi Okonjo-Iweala and the outgoing Deputy DG of WTO, Ambassador Allan Wolf. The trade for Peace network allows the g7+ an opportunity to identify themes, areas and modes of engagement and collaboration and raises the voices of countries in fragile situations in world trade policies. Our congratulations to Liberia and Timor-Leste for being the co-coordinators the g7+ WTO Accession Group, which has played a leading role in the creation of the Trade for Peace Initiative. We thanked the Former Ambassador of Afghanistan to the WTO, Mr. Mohammad Qurban Haqjo for his instrumental leadership in the establishment of the g7+ WTO Accession Group, and welcome Ambassador Sayed Ramin Ziway as the new Permanent Representative of Afghanistan to the WTO.

Recently, we have restarted our communication with the World Bank Fragility, Conflict and Violence Unit to resume our regular meeting with the World Bank Senior Management to seek how the Bank can assist g7+ member countries in debt relief and support COVID-19 Vaccines.

The g7+ Secretariat facilitated a consultation Meeting between the g7+ member countries and the Global Partnership for Effective Development Cooperation on 15 March 2021 in which we advocated for the use of the New Deal Engagement in Fragile States as the guiding way for the monitoring of the Global Partnership. During the meeting, most of the participants raised similar issues and challenges that they face, ranging from alignment of aid to the national priorities, lack of data, country ownership and leadership in the project implementation to the request of technical Assistance on the monitoring process to ensure its effectiveness.

Finally, I would like to reiterate our gratitude to our partners, associates, and stakeholders at the national regional and international level for their engagement and continued partnership with g7+ in promoting peacebuilding and statebuilding. Stay safe amid the covid-19 pandemic.