

Center for Strategic and International Studies

Online Event

Launch of the 2021 U.N. Global Humanitarian Overview

The Humanitarian Landscape: Reversal or Recovery?

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FEATURING:

Mark Lowcock

U.N. Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)

Henrietta Fore

Executive Director, U.N. Children's Fund (UNICEF)

Trey Hicks

Assistant to the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development's (USAID) Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance (BHA)

Representative Ami Bera (D-CA-07)

United States House of Representatives

Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD)

United States Senate

Fatouma Zara Laouan

Gender in Emergencies Specialist

CSIS EXPERTS:

J. Stephen Morrison

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JACOB KURTZER:

Hello, and welcome to the Center for Strategic and International Studies. I'm Jacob Kurtzer, Interim Director of the Humanitarian Agenda.

I'd like to welcome you to the launch today of the U.N.'s 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview. On behalf of Dr. Steve Morrison and the CSIS Global Health Security Program, thank you for joining us online today. We're very grateful to all of our distinguished panelists for taking the time to share their thoughts with us today, but we're especially grateful to you – the viewing audience, which we know is comprised of practitioners, academics, NGO representatives, government agencies – for joining us to listen and engage in this vital subject. Like all of our events, today's discussion is part of our ongoing dialogue to understand and improve our collective response to the world's most pressing humanitarian challenges. And we encourage your feedback and engagement during this event and beyond.

We're here today to launch the Global Humanitarian Overview with its very sobering themes, findings, and projections. 2020 has been a difficult year, made more so by the understanding that the shocks we're experiencing today are setting up a more challenging tomorrow. This year saw increased armed conflict and violence, political paralysis at the highest levels, global protest movements around social justice, and of course the COVID-19 pandemic that had compelled us out of respect for the health and safety of our communities to host events like these online. As the global community grapples with getting the pandemic under control, the challenges facing us are legion. The economic upheaval caused by COVID will generate further turmoil while the capacity to respond will be diminished.

The felt impact of the pandemic in global capitals makes reading this year's report even more poignant. A shared global experience – with field hospitals deployed in Manhattan and humanitarian deployments in Western Europe – opened many of our eyes to the reality experienced by millions already living in crisis that have limited access to care and a sense of helplessness. It also makes the looming gap between the identified global needs and the resources being made available even starker. COVID looms large and dominates our attention, and climate shocks continue to generate devastating humanitarian consequences. And the picture of needs arising from armed conflict, from political and social failures continues to grow with over 30 countries continuing to experience active hostilities. Denial of humanitarian access, a theme for our program, already a complex problem in conflict zones will soon present a challenge not for the distribution of the necessities for humanitarian assistance, but also to vaccine distribution.

Through this all, frontline humanitarian workers and their teams around the world continue to work diligently to help others in need. Local community relief organizations, religious institutions, national and international NGOs, and the U.N. and its agencies are continuing to push back against the tide of need, despite the strong headwinds. And we're very grateful for their work, and for taking the time to share with us today the projections for the future and the steps we can take to improve the lives and dignity of millions of people.

I'd like to now turn it over to my friend and colleague Dr. Steve Morrison to introduce our speakers and moderate today's event. Over to you, Steve.

J. STEPHEN MORRISON:

Thanks, Jake. And hello, good afternoon. I'm J. Stephen Morrison, Senior Vice President here at CSIS.

I'm delighted to be able to cohost the launch – the Washington launch of the Global Humanitarian Overview. This is a very big moment in history. We'll hear more from Under-Secretary Mark Lowcock in a moment. Congratulations to him, and congratulations to the 40 different U.N. field offices, country offices, that contributed to this report from around the world. And we look forward to the full report, 200-page long analysis, that follows. This is a remarkable, unique, and very powerful, and authoritative piece of work at a particularly poignant and dangerous moment in time.

I want to offer special thanks to Lisa Carty and Amierah Ismail from U.N. OCHA. On the CSIS staff special thanks to Clifton Jones, to Jake, to John Goodrick, and the Humanitarian Agenda Program, and my colleagues Global Health Policy Center, Amith Mandavilli, Anna McCaffrey. Other people helped us pull these pieces together, Mia Beers from USAID, Richard Greene from UNICEF, and the congressional staff who I will mention in a few minutes.

A few quick words about the CSIS Commission on Strengthening America's Health Security. It's been around since 2018. It's carrying forward through 2022, cochaired by Julie Gerberding and former Senator Kelly Ayotte. We have six members of Congress on it. Today we have one of those members with us, Congressman Ami Bera. We've put disorder in the word and humanitarian emergencies as a central concept around thinking about preparedness for outbreaks. That was true in the major report we issued in November of '19.

Today we are looking very seriously at the implications of COVID in fragile settings that are already struggling. And in the coming new year we will see several major pieces of work coming forward with recommendations to Congress and the new administration, and to international organizations. We'll have a piece coming out on the fiscal insolvency, the risk of insolvency in low-income and middle-income countries, authored by Stephanie Segal, senior economist and senior fellow at CSIS. We'll be looking at COVID access – at access to vaccines in low- and middle-income countries, and the COVAX facility, the ACT Accelerator. We'll be looking at what kind of U.S. diplomatic strategy is going to be needed now in resuming a form of multilateralism and engagement on all of these matters. We'll be looking at the restoration of CDC's functionality, reputation, and effectiveness, among other issues.

As I was looking over these materials for today I was struck by a couple of things. One is the sheer velocity and scale of what is happening in the world, and in the world of humanitarian crises. It's simply astonishing, as COVID-19 now aggravates and rips through already highly fragile crisis nations. Mark will enumerate what that all means, a cascade of shocks that swift translate into intensifying crises. We'll hear more about all of those dimensions. And we'll hear that, in fact, the worst is not over. That looking ahead into 2021 we need to brace ourselves for what lies ahead. There have been improvements. We'll hear about that, improvements in the delivery. There's been much learned in the midst of these crises.

But that does not begin to address the widening gap. And we have to face today the idea – the reality that that gap is widening significantly. It’s a big moment. It’s a bit ask in this report. We’ll hear about that from Mark. And it raises the question of: Do we need to really gird ourselves and rethink the approaches that we’re going to take. The absence of high-level diplomacy has been quite stark. It’s brought home just how indebted we are to the likes of Mark Lowcock, Henrietta Fore from UNICEF, Trey Hicks from USAID, Fatouma Zara, the independent NGO sector, and from the bedrock of bipartisan support in our own Congress for these programs. And we’ll be hearing from Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Bera.

But as the world turns its attentions to vaccines, in the midst of the COVID crisis in 2021, I think we will turn out attention and out spotlight even more so to the humanitarian crises that are besetting these countries. And we’re – and the spotlight will turn in that way, and we need to be asking ourselves how we – how we should be thinking strategically about how to use this transitional moment in 2021 to really bring about a new form of high-level diplomacy focused on these problems.

That brings me to my last point which is U.S. leadership remains absolutely essential. And it has never faded in this particular sphere. We are poised as a nation to do much more, and to do much good. And a promising transition moment is unfolding. How does the U.S. use the return to the multilateral table to the best advantage? How does it build on the gains that we’ve seen? And we’ll hear from Trey Hicks in terms of consolidating OFDA, Food for Peace, a strengthened and more effective Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. This is a big moment to be raising those issues. We also know that we’re watching carefully and anxiously as to what other crises may lie on the horizon. We’ll hear from Mark about that, particularly Ethiopia, Afghanistan are standouts there.

What we’re going to do today, we’re going to show a quick clip in a moment of – from the U.N. Secretary General Guterres. Then we’re going to hear from Under-Secretary-General Mark Lowcock. And he is the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and the Emergency Relief Coordinator, and head of the U.N. Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs. Welcome, Mark.

I know this is your fifth rodeo today. And you have to be absolutely spent and exhausted. And we’re very grateful that you’ve done this. And I’m sure there’s something on the other side of the fifth and final one where you can get some rest and recover. But this is just testimony to your remarkable perseverance and commitment on these issues. Mark’s been in this role since May of 2017, three and a half years. It’s an exhausting and demanding role, among the most exhausting and demanding. Previous to that served as permanent secretary of DFID, a 30-year career working in development and international humanitarian emergencies.

So, Mark, thank you so much for all the work you’ve done. Thank you for this amazing piece of work. It’s not happy, but it’s very, very important that it arrive at this moment in time. And thank you for taking time to be with us today for the Washington launch. So over to you.

(A video presentation begins.)

UNITED NATIONS SECRETARY-GENERAL ANTONIO GUTERRES:

This year, 2020, has been a year like no other. Conflict, climate change and COVID-19 have created the greatest humanitarian challenge since the Second World War. The number of people at risk of starvation has doubled. Hundreds of millions of children are out of school. Levels of extreme poverty have risen for the first time in 22 years, and the humanitarian system again proved its worth in 2020 delivering food, medicines, shelter, education, and other essentials to tens of millions of people. But the crisis far from over. Humanitarian aid budgets face dire shortfalls as the impact of the global pandemic continues to worsen.

Today we launch the 2021 Global Humanitarian Overview – our most comprehensive assessment of humanitarian needs around the world. We must mobilize to support those at greatest risk in these unprecedented times. We need \$35 billion U.S. to get life-saving aid to 160 million of the most vulnerable people. And we must also continue to address the root causes driving humanitarian needs, starting with conflict. I urge all parties to conflict, and those with influence over them, to support my call for a global ceasefire by the end of 2020. I thank all donors who generously support global humanitarian efforts. Together we must mobilize resources and stand in solidarity with people in their darkest hour of need. Thank you.

(Video presentation ends.)

MR. MORRISON:

OK. Mark, over to you.

MARK LOWCOCK:

Can you hear me OK?

MR. MORRISON:

Yes, we can hear you.

MR. LOWCOCK:

Thank you. So a few days ago I spoke to Adama, a 42-year-old widow in Burkina Faso whose village was attacked by gunmen last year leaving her husband and other family members dead. She described to me how she'd walked for nearly 19 hours with her nine children from her village in the Centre Nord region to Kaya, the regional capital. Though she found refuge and shelter in very cramped conditions in Kaya, she does not have enough food and needs money to send her children to school. She's especially worried about her daughters who are at greater risk of sexual exploitation the longer they stay out of school.

A couple of days after that I spoke to 12-year-old Michael and his mother, Angelina, in South Sudan. They fled their home to a protection site in Wau after her husband was killed. Angelina can't afford to send her children to school anymore, especially when getting food on the table is such a challenge. What Michael told me was that most of all he wants to be able to go back to school and learn to read and write because, he said, he knows he has to finish his education so he can support his mother and family now that his father is gone.

I want to thank you very much, Steve and Jake and everybody at CSIS, for giving us the opportunity to have this discussion today, for the warmth of your welcome, for the excellent analysis and insights you always contribute through the CSIS Global Health Policy Center and the Humanitarian Agenda. I'm very privileged, I must say, to be able to be joining Trey Hicks and Henrietta Fore and Fatouma Zara in this discussion and look forward later on also to hearing from members of Congress.

The U.S. has long been at the very forefront of humanitarian issues, whether through its generous financial support, its political leadership, its policy innovation, or the work of its NGOs, often on the frontlines of the most dangerous crises. I have to say to you that we need that leadership now today more than ever because 2020 has shown us, in sharp and sometimes painful focus, that human progress is not an unstoppable or inevitable force. In just nine months, the pandemic has put decades of human development at risk.

It quickly became clear that it was not the virus itself doing most harm in vulnerable countries. It was the impacts of the global recession and lockdowns. Rising food prices, falling incomes, drops in remittances, interrupted vaccination programs, school closures, heightened risks of gender-based violence – all these things hit the poorest people in the poorest countries hardest. In the most vulnerable countries, COVID is exploiting pre-existing drivers of instability and humanitarian crises. The sheer speed and scale of what's happening is astonishing. As the Secretary-General just said, extreme poverty has risen for the first time in more than 20 years. By the end of the year the number of people facing starvation will have nearly doubled, to reach 270 million. The annual death toll from HIV, tuberculosis, and malaria is likewise set to double.

Yet, despite unprecedented challenges the humanitarian system does remain strong. Humanitarian workers, local and international NGOs, civil society groups and individuals from the affected communities went above and beyond to help prevent the worst outcomes. They were able to do that, in large part, because of the generosity of donors, led by the U.S., who've given more than \$17 billion so far this year to the Global Humanitarian Response Plan for COVID-19 and to our other U.N.-coordinated humanitarian appeals.

Funding went further and faster than ever before. Overall, we reached nearly 100 million people this year with life-saving support. But we must face facts. The outlook is bleak. By the end of next year 150 million more people could sink into extreme poverty. Women and girls will be hit hardest. Millions of girls may never return to school. Vaccine interruptions could trigger massive disease outbreaks. And famine – famine, something we thought we had consigned to history – could once again be commonplace because of climate change, conflicts, and the global economic contraction.

The gap between needs and available funds keeps growing. I fear we still don't have a response that matches the scale of the crisis. In 2020, the cost of responding to humanitarian needs rose from \$29 billion to \$31 billion, and then to \$39 billion. And although the donors have shown unprecedented generosity, again led by the U.S., the gap between humanitarian need and funding has never been larger. If the gap continues to widen we're going to have to ask ourselves some difficult questions. What does the unraveling of 40 years of progress mean for people around the world? What will many already vulnerable parts of the world look like? Do we want to be the generation of leaders with multiple global tragedies as a stain on our consciences?

None of this is inevitable. We know what the problems are, and we know what we can do to solve them. But it will need everyone to put their shoulder to the wheel. The Global Humanitarian Overview – and thank you, Steve, for your kind words about it at the top – I mean, it is the most comprehensive, authoritative, and evidence-based assessment of humanitarian need across the world. It's the work of thousands of people in dozens of countries across hundreds of organizations – most of them NGO, but also bringing in the whole Red Cross family as well as the U.N. system. It sets out costed, targeted, and highly prioritized country and regional plans from developed by both U.N. agencies and their NGO and government partners to meet these needs.

Next year, \$35 billion dollars is needed to help 160 million of the most vulnerable people in countries around the world. And I know that numbers that – they're so big they feel abstract. But I do ask everyone to remember that we are talking about real people. And that's why I started my remarks to you today telling you about my conversations with Adama and Michael and Angelina. Helping them is the right and generous thing to do to, but it is also in the self-interest of better-off countries to fully fund these humanitarian plans.

Every nation has been hurt by the pandemic. But some need more help than others to get through it. Problems grow when they're ignored. Global problems go global if we let them. Wealthy nations have the means and motivation to help. And U.S. leadership remains as essential as ever. As you alluded to, Steve, I've been doing this kind of work for some decades now – for 35 years. I've repeatedly seen in that time that when the world deals well with crises it is because the U.S. plays a leadership role. That was true in the response to HIV/AIDS in Africa in the '80s and '90s. It was true in the financial crisis in 2008-9. It was true in dealing with Ebola in West Africa in 2014-15.

The U.S., and the world I think, are healthier and safer places with American leadership. Unlike any other country, in fact, the U.S. has the ability to bring the world together, to get others to do what they need to do, behind an effective response to the rising tide of humanitarian need and its consequences. Investing now will reduce the scale of the challenge, and it will avoid a much higher bill in the years to come. The faster our response plans are funded, the better. 2021 could be the year of the grand reversal – the unravelling of 40 years of progress – but it doesn't have to. We could build forward better. The choices we make now matter. Thank you very much indeed.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you very much, Mark. That was – that was very powerful and every moving.

I'm going to introduce – we're going to move into our roundtable discussion, which we'll pull you into, Mark. In this discussion we're going to ask Trey and Henrietta and, if we're successful at pulling Fatouma Zara in from Niger. We're having some technical problems, but if we're successful she'll join our conversation as well. Let me just quickly introduce these distinguished folks who are going to join us.

Trey Hicks is Assistant to the Administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development. He has served in that role and has served in the leadership ranks of USAID in

bringing about the consolidation of Food for Peace and the Office of Foreign Disaster Assistance, OFDA, into the new Bureau for Humanitarian Assistance. Prior to that he served as the director of the Office of Food for Peace. And prior to that, several years in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, with responsibilities on oversight and accountability of U.S. Foreign Assistance.

We're joined also by Henrietta Fore, executive director of UNICEF. She's been in that role now for three years. Prior to that she served as the administrator for the U.S. Agency for International Development in the administration of President George W. Bush, three years 2007-2009. And in an earlier Bush administration she served as the assistant administrator, both for Asia Bureau and for the Private Enterprise Bureau. And I must emphasize here, she is also a stalwart and generous friend of CSIS. She has been on our board. She's been a counsel for over four decades now. And is among the most revered and valued and cherished personalities in our family of CSIS.

Fatouma Zara is – comes to us a specialist in gender in emergency specialist based in Niger. She worked for six years with CARE, with a central focus on the Sahel. But also this took her into working in fragile contexts in Asia, Central and South America. She recently authored the CARE analysis – rapid gender analysis of the impacts of COVID-19 in West Africa. We're hoping we can pull her into this discussion.

I'm going to start with Trey. Trey, we're going to do a round – two rounds of discussion here in which we're going to put a question to each of you. And then we're going to come back to Mark to fill out this. The first round, Trey, if you could share with us your perspective, from where you sit at USAID: How has USAID adapted to the response of the new threats of the type posed by COVID-19 in the course of this year, and the anticipated rise in humanitarian needs? And we'd like to hear about the experience in restructuring AID as part of that strategy. We'd also like to hear a bit about the burden sharing required because we know the gap is widening. We've heard from Mark that leadership is essential. U.S. leadership, but not that the U.S. is going to bear the disproportionate share. It can do more, but we're going to need a new form of diplomacy in trying to bring others into this if we're going to begin to close that gap.

Over to you, Trey. Thank you so much for being with us today.

TREY HICKS:

So first of all, let me thank OCHA and CSIS for hosting this launch, providing this very important platform to discuss how we can more effectively address all of these challenges. It's sobering. That overview is foreshadowing an upcoming year that's unlike any other year we've ever had. That figure of 235 million people that are in need, it's a staggering figure. These people are facing incredible difficult hurdles just to survive. It's astounding. And we are extremely concerned about the already-alarming levels of global food security that have only been exacerbated due to the pandemic. It's just getting worse.

In 2020, our Famine Early Warning System Network, or FEWS NET, estimated about 113 people in about 46 of the most food-insecure countries have faced crisis level of food insecurity. This represents a 25 percent increase – 25 percent before the pandemic. That's a huge spike. This past year the entire humanitarian community faced the challenges of not only rising to this spike in need, but every country has been touched by the devastating impacts of the pandemic.

And on top of that, it's the extreme operational challenges with the travel restrictions and having to be COVID sensitive in everything we do.

And despite all these challenges, the U.S. government has responded with more than \$10.5 billion in humanitarian assistance, which includes – 7 billion (dollars) of that is from my bureau at the Humanitarian Assistance Bureau here at USAID. And it's going for food and other lifesaving food aid – lifesaving humanitarian aid over this past fiscal year. We have a very robust multisector COVID-19 response to address the immediate lifesaving needs. But we're also working to mitigate future deterioration of these humanitarian conditions, including food security.

And as Mark just noted, this is not enough. We know this is not enough to meet the challenge. Year after year, humanitarian needs outpace the resources to respond. And if we are to stem this tide, we need all donors – including governments, but not just governments, private sector organizations as well as international financial institutions – all of us need to step up and provide the adequate funding to address these challenges. The U.S. can't do it alone. We cannot do it alone. We need other partners to step up. It's not just government; it's also private sector as well.

We need to collectively build the trust in the system to make sure that everyone has the faith that it's operating as efficiently and as effectively as possible, and that all of these scarce resources that we're being taxed with for all the other domestic strains from the pandemic, we need to build the confidence that these scarce resources going into the humanitarian system are absolutely being effectively used to directly benefit those in need. So with the compounding impact of COVID-19, we must all carry the share of this responsibility to prevent this backsliding, to mitigate the impacts, there's growing food insecurity, and to ensure that these most vulnerable people are not left behind.

And, Stephen, as you noted in your question, USAID undertook a massive transformation this year. We stood up a bureau in the middle of the pandemic. We stood up BHA. It didn't slow us down because this need for this reorganization was obvious. In order to ensure that our humanitarian operations are as efficient and effective as possible, while also positioning us to meet these new challenges, we needed to bring together the Offices of Foreign Disaster Assistance and Food for Peace. We merged it into this new Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance.

And this new bureau combines the strength of both legacy offices, enabling us to deliver lifesaving assistance more efficiently, effectively, more cohesively, as one, to meet the challenges today. As BHA is the lead coordinator of U.S. federal disaster assistance, they're also the leading donor of humanitarian assistance around the globe, efficiency and effectiveness are crucial. And it's also crucial in building faith in this system – this humanitarian system.

With the merger of BHA, we are strengthening our more holistic approach to humanitarian assistance, providing assistance before, during, and after the crises, from readiness and response to relief and recovery – recovering the whole gamut. Reform like ours, I can tell you, is not very easy. Taking two offices with some two different approaches, combining them, it's very challenging. And it requires a lot of patience, a lot of perseverance. But we did it because it's important to always improve. And I urge the rest of the international humanitarian community to also pursue the hard work of reform for themselves. Innovation and efforts to

reform the humanitarian system writ large will remain a critical piece to ensure that every dollar of our humanitarian aid goes further and further, most crucially efforts to improve the humanitarian program cycle, to ensure accurate and prioritized appeals, to continue the determination and goodwill by all those involved.

And I want to give a really good example of where this came together very well. We were very encouraged by efforts we have seen places like the Central African Republic, where humanitarian leadership from the humanitarian coordinator met with strong collaboration by partners on the ground. There's a data-driven approach. And this resulted in a high quality in accurate appeals in recent years. And as donors worked to support the staggering \$35 billion global appeal and urging all the U.N. agencies to provide critical coordination and implementation support to accelerate efforts to evaluate and reduced these management costs, prevent duplication. And all of this is going to help those in need get the help they need more efficiently.

And finally, and most importantly, let me express my sincere gratitude on behalf of USAID for the courageous efforts of the humanitarian workers, particularly those responding in their own communities, to overcome these insurmountable odds. They're – often these people are risking their lives on the frontline to reach those in need with food, protection, clean water, shelter, and more. And you humanitarian workers, you don't wear masks, you don't wear capes, but I have to tell you, you are the true superheroes living among us. Your dedication and your efforts show us every day the very, very best of humanity. So I just want to close my remarks with a huge applause for the frontline humanitarian workers. You inspire us. And we thank you for that.

Thanks.

MR. MORRISON:

Thanks so much, Trey. Very moving, terrific presentation. I know that it's been a tough year in terms of trying to move product, trying to get things forward. We can perhaps come back to some of those obstacles and how to get over some of those.

Henrietta Fore is our next – is our next roundtable speaker. Henrietta, tell us a bit about how UNICEF has adapted in this period, and also the responsibilities that it is assuming with respect to vaccine distribution under the COVAX facility. That's a monumental new responsibility, on top of already very monumental responsibilities.

HENRIETTA FORE:

Thank you, Steve. And it's fun to listen to both Trey and Mark because you can see that the humanitarian community is really coming together, and that part of what COVID has done is it has made sure that we realized that if we collaborated we could get more done, and that more funds could move faster and at scale than we had realized. So it has actually made us better as a humanitarian response team out there in the field.

So what have we seen? Well, at UNICEF when COVID first hit all the questions from governments were about: Can you – can you tell us what we need to do? Can you get word out to

our people about how they can keep themselves safe from COVID? So we started getting information out on television, on radio, handbills, posters, everything we could see, SMS, to tell people what COVID was, how they could try to stay safe, how they could keep their family safe.

And then the secondary they wanted from us was personal protective equipment. And it's everything for your health care workers to your teachers to everyone. And the supply chain for our humanitarian warehouses – Copenhagen is our largest – were just inundated with orders. Millions and millions of orders for masks, gowns, oxygen concentrators – everything you could think of that would keep people safe.

And then the third area that we were asked about was one of retraining. So we have polio workers. Could they be retrained into being COVID workers? Yes. It's different, but yes we could. So retraining of health care workers. As Trey just said, a very articulate and moving paean to the health care workers in the field, they are magnificent. And so they're retraining. Their safety is important for all of us.

But then as the weeks progressed the socioeconomic impact began to hit us hard. We are an agency that does humanitarian and development work, and we began to see that many of these problems are going to be long term. So we focused in five areas. The first was immunization. We had found during COVID that families were just not coming in for routine immunizations for their children. Children under the age of one and under the age of five need routine immunizations or they can die of preventable childhood diseases. Measles comes to mind. But many of these families were not bringing their children in because they were afraid of catching something in the community clinics, or they didn't have transportation, and there are many other reasons. So immunization because important to save lives.

Then the second area was distance learning. One-point-six billion children were out of school. Ninety-one percent of the students in the world were out of school. So how do we get distance learning, learning by radio, by television, by cellphone – how could we get education still operating so that children, and learners, and teachers could all be continuing? And that was to save futures. The third area that was very clear early on was water. We need more water – clean water available in households, in hospitals, in health clinics, in schools. Very often there is not a tap with running water and a bar of soap, so it's hard then to keep yourself safe from something like COVID. And that is to save communities.

And then fourthly, it was mental health. This pandemic has caused a real impact on children, on families for mental health. Most mental health problems begin by the time you're 15 –14-15. And you can see that the young people have been exhibiting stress and fear and anxiety, depression. There's more sense of self-harm, of thinking about suicide than we've ever had. There's also anger. It's very hard on them. And mental health issues are something that this generation wants to talk about, as opposed to our generations. We've got to make it OK for them to talk about it. So mental health to save families. And lastly is nutrition. What Mark was saying about famine is real. There is a serious shortage of food that is affordable, that is accessible.

So these then became the areas that we worked on clearly and strongly. But as you have just mentioned the COVID, then came the COVID vaccine. So UNICEF right now moves about half of the world's vaccines, about 2 billion a year to about 100 countries, so to the low and middle-income countries. And we get it out to some of the hardest to reach places because we know that

child survival depends on having good, routine immunizations. What COVID is now doing is that our systems for vaccines will be utilized for the procurement and the distribution of another 2 billion vaccines. So next year we plan to move double what we are moving now.

So our facilities are set up for procurement, quality testing. We also are looking at a wide variety of testing kits. We do acquisition of a lot of personal protective equipment. So all of these supplies need to go out into the field and need to go out in the low- and middle-income countries. Often the high-income countries can move it themselves, and that is good. But we're going to have to operate in a very complex logistical system. So we have right now about 350 logistics suppliers that are helping us. They're public and private. This is an enormous, massive, worldwide effort. We could use help. We need it for private companies, back to what Trey was saying about the private sector. Everyone can help us with this. Cold chain and the number of vaccinations that you need are going to be a challenge for all of us in moving this through the system.

And then lastly, Steve, we have a very big challenge in terms of communication for people in communities trusting vaccines. We need people to accept vaccinations, that they see that a vaccine works and that they want one. If we can do that, we think we can protect 4 billion next year, and we would want to do so. So it's a challenge. We can use help. And the challenge is growing for all of us.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you, Henrietta, so much. It's a daunting – it's an amazing – when you add that picture up, it's an amazing picture.

Fatouma, can you hear me, and can we hear you? I think you need – you're on mute. If you can take off the mute – unmute. Yeah.

FATOUMA ZARA LAOUAN:

Yes, I can hear you, Steve.

MR. MORRISON:

Excellent. Great to see you, Fatouma. Thank you so much for being with us. I'm glad we can the connection and we can see you. If you could open please by telling us a little bit about – you've been very active in the course of this COVID outbreak over the course of 2020 in trying to track the impacts, with special reference to the gender dimension of all of this. You've done an in-depth survey for CARE on this; you've been to many different places looking at it. Can you share with us what you've learned and observed in this period, please?

MS. LAOUAN:

Thank you so much, Steve, for having me on this panel. Thank you to Mr. Lowcock and other panelists for pointing out all the challenges COVID-19 has brought to the humanitarian community. And I'm sorry for the connectivity. I missed Mr. Lowcock's address, but from so far what I got there is nothing surprising that has been said so far as per what we see in the field

according to the various general analysis on the impact of COVID-19 that we did in many areas. And particularly I wanted to expand on some few points that may add to what has been already said.

The first one is gender-based violence. And we all know that emergency exacerbates the gender-based violence, and some creates new ones. COVID-19 has done as well similar. And we've seen increase in gender-based violence because of the specificity of the COVID-19 pandemic. Lockdown, confinement has brought, you know, family members to become largely at home, including the potential GBV perpetrator, right?

And in addition a lot of domestic core and battle has to be beared by women and girl at the same time because of this presence, permanent at home, of family members, while at the same time family have lost their source of income and their resources were depleted and exhausted, and need at the same time – as pervious panelists have raised – need to have increases in all areas including basic needs but also additional needs in terms of hygiene, need of having soap and clean water or, you know, wearing facial masks – which is not given for any single poor family around.

In addition, women have lost their negotiating power. Because of the loss of their source of income in informal businesses, that are the first to be hit by the COVID-19, they are no more in a power position to negotiate, or to bargain, or to decide something for the family. All these combined has increased the level of domestic violence. And for instance, according to the protection clause in Burkina Faso that (conducted ?) Asouvi (ph) in central north region of the country, rape and sexual assault have increased 46 percent simply from January to April 2020, which includes not only rape in general but also marital rape has been reported, but also people we talk with too have reported an increase in what we say child marriage, especial for girls, because this has been a means or a strategy to not only cope with the limited capacity and the resources, but also to prevent them from further violence.

All this at the same time women and girls bear the most of the brunt of this. And at the same time, they don't have access to support system. Existing support system by the government, civil society and humanitarian actors did stop where they needed. But at the same time informal network also stopped because of the physical distancing, the social distancing, the confinement. So one lady from Cameroon told us that you carry your suffering alone. No women will come to you to take you company or to console you. Where another woman from northeast Nigeria told us that: I'm no more going to the safe spaces because the humanitarian worker are no more coming to provide support. So I – therefore, I miss the support that I would need.

On the other hand, if we look at the hunger increase, this has definitely – as Henrietta rightly said – an impact on women, especially those pregnant or lactating, but also children under five. And those vulnerable specific people – disabled people, elderly, those living with chronic diseases – will be left behind. And they have specific nutrition needs. If we look at the education side, not only all children, or most of them, have been faced the drop down on their school education, but mostly girls. Because those men, in terms of difficult moment to choose, parents choose to pay for the school fee of their boys instead of paying for the girl. And these poor girls mostly spend their time also helping their mother in providing care in the domestic burden and so.

If we look at the access to basic service, including health, women and girls also have to bear most of the brunt of it because of being vulnerable even before the pandemic, but specifically due to the pandemic. And because of their traditional gender role, women and girls are those providing care. They are also most women making most of the health – frontline health workers. So they faced additional risk of contracting the virus. At the same time, access to health service – basic health service has been limited or even nonexistent, because priority has been given to the pandemic. The other health care system is very limited or is nonexistent.

For instance, for the case of Burkina Faso, they're already facing a conflict and displacement crisis when COVID-19 hit. So the health centers have limited time to offer service because of the curfew. At the same time, the physical distancing has limited the caseload – the daily caseload that the health service could attend on a daily basis. And if you add the fear that families have to access to health service because they fear to contract the pandemic there, all this prevents families and vulnerable people to access – to access all their health care.

And for instance, what struck me was the sexual and reproductive health service. Women told us in Burkina Faso that some women had to give birth at home because of the combination of curfew, confinement, the requirement of using facial mask to access health service. And by night, they did give birth without support, which is actually a high risk for them of maternal death but also of children and newborn mortality. Indeed, this is a lesson learned during the Ebola crisis in West Africa, but unfortunately this has not been incorporated into the – so far, into the COVID-19 management.

One thing that we see in terms of adaptation by family to cope with this situation is to organize themselves in group – because women used to organize themselves in solidarity group, village saving and loan groups that will support each other socially, mentally, but they also support each other financially. With the COVID-19 restrictive measure and confinement, they adapt their way of operating to be able to continue working when respecting the physical distancing. And also they adapt their activity to produce and sell facial masks, which is timely, right, for the COVID-19. But also we saw youth organizing themselves to produce some makeshift handwashing station with reusable material that is affordable. And it can be used in – by default by poor community without access to all those preventive material.

We also see the highlights by this pandemic of the importance of new technology of information and communication. That has been so far not very looked at by development and humanitarian actors, but some attempt to use them for cash transfer. With COVID-19 and the social and physical distancing, information have been channeled through mass media – TV, radio, but also through social media. And women, because of the divide and the gap in accessing this new technology of information and communication and social media, they cannot access this information. They may access it via a man in the family, or not even at all.

So also the COVID-19 pandemic is not something that will go on very soon. I think it's something – and I really am happy to hear the holistic dimension that Trey has mentioned of the response. It's something that we have to learn to integration into our normal operating models, but also into our normal activities. So as well to transfer in these normal ways of working to communities, women and girls, with whom we're working. And this is very important aspect that I think has been mentioned but I miss it, but I think that's worth mentioning.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you so much, Fatouma. Thank you.

We're getting to – I want to be able to offer Mark Lowcock an opportunity to respond to what he's heard from each of you before we get to the end of this segment of our program. We're going to move to Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Ami Bera momentarily. We have three or four minutes here. Back to you, Mark Lowcock. What's your response to what we've heard from Trey, from Fatouma and from Henrietta?

MR. LOWCOCK:

Well, Steve, thank you very much. I mean, my response is really wild agreement with everything I've – everything I've heard. Let me just illustrate a few points. I mean, I think Trey is so right to draw our attention to the fact that all these problems we're talking about have causes. And until we start to address the causes we shouldn't be surprised if the symptoms keep getting – keep getting worse. I also was pleased that he drew attention to the role of the IFIs. One of the disappointments for me, if I'm candid, on the international response so far for the poorest countries is that the shareholders have not been able to agree that the IFIs should do the kinds of things that need to happen.

We're starting to see a bit of progress on that in respect of the indebtedness problem that countries face, but there's more to go. And I think it's really important when the indebtedness problem is addressed that all the creditors are at the table – the new creditors, in particular a lot of Chinese institutions and private sector, not just the traditional creditors. You know, this isn't going to work if some people think there's a free lunch to be had. Everyone needs to come to the table on this. And that's, of course, what's most difficult about it.

I wanted to just say to Henrietta how much I think she underplayed really the role UNICEF had played on this question of information. You know, one of the big problems in the modern world is that too many people don't believe things that are true and do believe things that aren't true. And in a pandemic that's a huge problem. And we know in the U.N. that there is quite a high level of trust in information we provide.

And in fact, in those programs that Henrietta referred to 3 billion people on the planet got information from the kinds of things that she described in more than 130 countries and involving the work of more than 70,000 staff and volunteers. And I think that was an important thing to do. There have been other innovations we've instigated as well. For example, the Nobel Peace Prize-winning World Food Program basically created a new dedicated air service out of nothing when commercial airlines disappeared in the middle of the year.

On the vaccines issue, I mean, actually as it happens I've got another event in D.C. on Monday next week where we'll be talking more about what's next on COVID. And vaccines are going to be very important there. One of the things that Henrietta said is super important, that it's going to be a huge challenge just to organize a delivery system which doesn't just rebuild the routine immunization but can take on this big extra task as well. And thinking about how we do that now I do think is very important.

And then lastly I just thought Fatouma was very, very articulate and explained very clearly the huge additional burden women and girls in the poorest countries have faced through the crisis. Of course, there's been observably increases in domestic violence and intimate partner violence in many countries, not just poorer countries during the course of 2020. But I'm afraid it is the case that, you know, the behavior of men towards women and girls, no doubt exacerbated by stress and anxiety and the economic pressures, but it – you know, it has been a very dark, bleak feature of what we've seen in 2020. And, you know, I wish we'd been able to secure more resources to support the hotlines and the services to women and girls and the safe spaces for them through this crisis, because I think that burden borne has been really a staggering one that isn't well enough understood. Thank you.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you so much, Mark. We need – I apologize to everyone on this roundtable because we could go on further here for some time. But we need to move on to introducing, hearing from Chris Van Hollen, Democrat from Maryland, and Representative Ami Bera, a Democrat from California. It's so important to be able to talk about the centrality of the bipartisan foundation of support within Congress for these matters, to hear from them about what the environment is going to look like in 2021 in Congress on these issues and what are congressional priorities. How do you make the case to Americans, and how does each, Senator Van Hollen and Representative Bera, respond to what we've heard here from Under-Secretary Lowcock today?

So welcome, Senator and Representative. Thank you so much for taking the time. Let's move directly to hear from you. Let's start with Senator Van Hollen, followed by Congressman Bera.

SENATOR CHRISTOPHER VAN HOLLEN (D-MD):

Well, thank you, Steve. Can you hear me OK?

MR. MORRISON:

Yes, can hear from you.

SEN. VAN HOLLEN:

Terrific. All right. Well, listen, I want to thank you and CSIS for organizing this important conversation and for all your work at the Global Health Policy Center. I also want to salute the Under-Secretary Lowcock. I was able to catch the last part of your remarks, but I've looked at your report and just grateful for your leadership during this very difficult time with the pandemic, and really shining a light on then inequities that existed before the pandemic, but of course have been deepened because of the pandemic. And thank you and your team for laying out sort of the challenge and a plan and strategy for confronting all the different dimensions of these problems. I also am pleased to be with my friend from the House, Ami Bera.

Look, I think as the Under-Secretary laid out in his report, 2021 will be one of two things. Either it will be a year that lives in infamy because we as an international community failed to take the steps to prevent a reversal of much of the hard-won progress we've made in many areas

over the last 40 years, or we will be able to summon our ability to work together to weather the storm and, you know, come back out on a path toward progress on the whole array of areas the Under-Secretary just mentioned.

With respect to the pandemic, I am pleased that beginning in January we will see a revival of American global leadership. We have an incoming administration with Joe Biden and Kamala Harris that is committed to multilateral efforts, committed to the United States playing a leadership role in international institutions, starting with the fact that they've committed to making our contributions to the World Health Organization and its important efforts – along with other U.N. agencies. And I can say that as a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee, and specifically the Subcommittee on Foreign Operations, I look forward to working with the new administration to meet those priorities. And I'm hopeful that in the Senate we can accomplish that on a bipartisan basis.

I heard the Under-Secretary and others talk briefly about the need to address the distribution of the vaccine and therapeutics. It's, of course, essential that we make the vaccine available to people in every corner of the world, and that we do it for free. We do it so that people are not deterred certainly by cost to getting the vaccine, because as we know it's not only in their interest and to the benefit of their health, but when we are dealing with a global pandemic, you know, protecting everybody's also protecting all of us. And we really need to stress that message here in the United States and elsewhere as we – as we tackle this. If we really want to defeat this pandemic, we need to beat it everywhere. And that requires a global response.

The United States unfortunately has not been, at least to date, a part of that global effort through the COVAX facility. But I'm hopeful that the United States will become a part of that. And I do want to salute the Gavi Alliance and the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation for their work with the Serum Institute in India with respect to the deployment of a vaccine. So clearly, you know, stopping the spread of this virus through vaccine, through continued social distancing, is obviously a priority.

But as the Under-Secretary pointed out in his report, the impact of this virus – the negative impact goes well beyond COVID-19 to all the other impacts, including the fact that the global economic recession has just deepened economic inequality, made it more difficult to, you know, provide health care, to fight other diseases that kill millions of people around the world, and also deepened the issues with respect to women and girls and discrimination around the world, including domestic violence. So we've seen all these other impacts of the pandemic deepen these problems. And we just need to come together to address them.

I will say, just bringing it a little closer to home here in the United States' Capitol, I am pleased that the Senate Appropriations bill that we hope to consider in a few weeks proposes about \$9.3 billion for global health problems for the upcoming fiscal year, for global health challenges, for the United States budget. And I am confident that working with the new administration we can further boost those contributions as well. But that was the product here in the Senate and in the House of a bipartisan effort. And I'm very hopeful that it will get over the finish line here by December 11th.

We also need desperately to pass another COVID emergency bill in the United States, both to address the domestic, you know, pieces of this but also the House HEROES Act does include some additional provisions for the United States with respect to the global fight against this pandemic. And we're still working to try to include some of those provisions in a final agreement, but for all those of you who are following this hour by hour, minute by minute, right now here in the United States Senate we're trying to put together some kind of bipartisan package. Just earlier today we had a bipartisan group of Senators that laid out some promising ideas. Unfortunately, they've met with some resistance already today from the majority leader here in the Senate. But we've got to get something done.

I am confident, in closing, that we'll get something done on the budget front, that I mentioned. That's going to be very important. But it's also essential that we do something in terms of emergency COVID relief both here in the United States, but also to help contribute to the global efforts. So I want to thank all of you for being part of the solution here, working to make sure that we fulfill our responsibilities to defeat this virus and address the other consequences. Let us – let us make sure that 2021 is – we take the fork in the road toward weathering the storm and getting back on the path toward, you know, addressing these huge global challenges that we face. So thank you all very much. Let me stop now because I know we want to be able to answer some questions.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you so much, Senator Van Hollen. That's terrific.

We'd like to hear next from Congressman Ami Bera. And, Congressman, thank you so much for your contribution to the CSIS Commission on Strengthening America's Health Security, and your leadership role in the House of Representatives. Over to you.

REPRESENTATIVE AMI BERA (D-CA):

Yeah, Stephen, thank you. And thanks, CSIS, for its leadership and its convening capabilities, as well as it's great to be on with Under-Secretary Lowcock and my former colleague in the House and Senator Van Hollen, who was a mentor and a real champion on these global humanitarian efforts.

Instead of echoing everything that Senator Van Hollen said – and I agree with everything he said – I'm going to talk a little bit about the role of Congress kind of moving forward as we look at the Biden administration coming in and, you know, the challenge that we have ahead of us. You know, the one thing that I think will be dramatically different with a Biden-Harris administration compared to the current administration is the multilateral approach, the reengagement in these multilateral institutions – you know, whether it's the WHO, you know, participating with Gavi, and the COVAX facility that Senator Van Hollen talked about, and the Global Vaccine Alliance. You know, and you have bipartisan support in Congress.

So if you think about the CEPI authorization bill that we authored on the House side passed with unanimous consent out of the Foreign Affairs Committee, but also passed with unanimous consent on the floor of the House. And we know there's bipartisan support for engagement like that on the Senate side. So I do think, as we look to defeat the virus globally,

there's a real opportunity to not just address the challenge that is directly in front of us, but can we actually create a global health workforce? Can we create those monitoring systems and early warning systems that can really be in place to help detect the next pandemic, and other biothreats that we know are out there that are real national security issues?

And then in conversation with my Republican colleagues, these are not partisan issues. These are issues that may have been hard to move in this administration, but certainly in an administration that's more open to the global leadership and global engagement, but I think we have real opportunity to work on in a bipartisan, bicameral way. And, you know, when you look at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, you know, you see a lot of Republican support for ideas of how we build a 21st century global health system, how we use the tools the aid and development in a strategic way in the 21st century.

I'd love to say we can write a foreign assistance act. It's been tried before. But I think we can write key components of foreign assistance. And this is where the appropriators are also, you know, really important. Hats off to the years of service of Nita Lowey, who's retiring. And, you know, I think it's important for us to acknowledge her work on the SFOPs and the appropriations side as a real champion of these issues.

Under-Secretary Lowcock touched on, you know, we will defeat this virus. There's a huge logistics challenge of ramping up global manufacturing, availability. You know, I do hope the AstraZeneca/Oxford vaccine does pan out because the logistics of delivery will be so much easier if we have a vaccine that doesn't have the cold storage challenges that the Pfizer/Moderna vaccine do. But, you know, talking to the folks at Gavi, they have been thinking through what those cold storage systems would look like in the developing world.

But I think the longer-term challenge – and, again, Under-Secretary Lowcock touched on this – are the secondary and tertiary impact of the pandemic. The mass food insecurity – we already had huge food insecurity in the world. But how we come together as a global community to address that challenge. And then with that food insecurity and the displacement of millions of individuals, the global fragility issue that will undermine many areas. And, you know, certainly in sub-Saharan Africa and elsewhere. We're seeing it in East Africa.

And how we come together in a multilateral coalition to – you know, the wealthier states spending the resources to address some of these issues. And I would couch these as national security issues. And, you know, how do we appropriately, as Congress, work together in a bipartisan way to provide the resources to the Biden-Harris administration to effectively engage? And, you know, obviously the administration takes the lead. And I'll close with this.

I think the biggest challenge that we've had on the House side, and I suspect on the Senate side as well, is that the Trump administration had very little engagement with Congress, very little, you know, partnership in terms of formulating policy, et cetera. And often, you know, we would pass bills, pass appropriation bills, send funding to the administration. But if you followed where those dollars were used, they weren't always being used as intended by Congress. And I think that will be a huge difference with the incoming administration, that there will be a willingness to sit down, work with Congress, make sure everyone's on the same page when we're talking about informed global engagement. And I think that will make for stronger policy.

So I'm cautiously optimistic. We have the immediate challenge ahead of us, but let's take this as an opportunity to build both public health systems here domestically that we deserve, but also global health systems that can help address these 21st century challenges at a time of global health – of, you know, recurring pandemic threats. So I will turn it back over to you, Stephen, so we can have some conversation.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you so much, Congressman. I'd like to turn back to Under-Secretary Lowcock. I'd also like to ask Henrietta Fore to come in and offer some remarks after Mark.

Mark, over to you.

MR. LOWCOCK:

Well, thank you very much, indeed. I mean, again, I entirely agree with what both Senator Van Hollen and Congressman Bera – great to see you again, Congressman, after that event we did a few months ago. I entirely agree with all the points that have been made.

I would like just to observe that U.S. scientists and U.S. innovators and pharmaceutical companies have been responsible for the lion's share of the, really by historical standards, spectacular progress so far on vaccines and treatments. There are others, of course, who are also having some success. Oxford, though European and South Asia manufacturing companies. But it is largely because of U.S. leadership on science and technology that although we're still in the middle of the tunnel we can start to see the glimmer of light at the end of it. And using the time to work out how, because it's still true that none of us will be safe until everyone's safe. How we work out how to use the time how to deploy those new tools effectively in the most difficult, challenging places.

Henrietta's wonderful organization, UNICEF, will be at the – really in the leadership end of that, and have lots of important experience. But I also am kept awake at night more by the consequences of the virus than the impact of the virus itself. As Congressman Bera has just said, there's really frightening increases in food insecurity, the fragility and instability that it is generating, the displacement, the refugee flows – all of those things are creating space, I'm afraid – I see this in lots of places I'm going to at the moment – for extremists, which pose a threat ultimately to everybody.

And so the – you know, the way you've both, as elected officials, set out the idea of the U.S. playing the kind of leadership role globally, and getting everybody behind efforts to promote better governance, promote the role of states in securing and providing justice for their citizens, and the international community getting behind what had to ultimately be nationally led efforts to do those things – I do think that's a really, really important part of the agenda, because we could get out of the COVID problem and still find the world is much worse than it was at the beginning of 2020 because of those other consequences. Thank you, Steve.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you, Mark.

Henrietta, would you like to respond to what we've heard from the two members of Congress?

MS. FORE:

Thank you, Steve. So, Senator Van Hollen, it's a pleasure to see you again, and Congressman Bera. And you are both right, and that is just what we need in Congress. I must say that from those of us in the United Nations and in the humanitarian world, the larger the help can be that comes out of the United States – both congressional as well as from the private sector community and the foundations in the United States – makes the world a better place. The needs are just enormous right now, and they are growing. So we could use the help. And we are enormously appreciative that you are working on it.

I think the gaps that we have before us are speed and scale. We aren't moving fast enough, even though, like, at an agency like UNICEF we are moving funds within 20 days that arrive in our bank accounts. We get them out into use in the field in 20 days. That's important. But we've got to get the scale. If we do not, we will not get on top of this. We are working hard on the vaccine procurement and distribution. We can use help from private and public sector. And we can use funding.

But it's a question of making sure that a lot of businesses know about these efforts in the United Nations, in the nonprofit organizations, in the bilateral agencies like USAID. Sometimes it's just they are too separated, and sometimes it is a break between humanitarian and development. So the more that everyone who's listening in can spread the word that the time is now, the need is now. We really could use the help.

And then lastly can I just come around to something that Mark Lowcock said, which is that every one of these 160 million people that we are trying to reach is an individual. Winter is now here in the northern part of the hemisphere. And in it there are a lot of – there are millions of children. And in the winter, it means that they're cold. They need a coat. They need a pair of shoes. They need some food. They need some health care. They need a schoolbook. So anything that we can do to help them now will bring us dividends in the future. It's a good investment. Thank you.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you, Henrietta. I think we've heard the sort of mixed environment that we're working from right now where we have an enormous amount of excitement and wonder about what's happened with the vaccines – which has astonished people and gone beyond our expectations with the first three that have come forward – but there's a certain apprehension around the operational demands and the complexities. And this is an historic and unprecedented moment.

Here in the United States and in much of the rest of the world we're in the midst of a surge that is also unprecedented. And that's caused enormous apprehension. And we're in our own political transition, so how do we – the challenge I think we face, and we're really talking about today, is how do we keep a focus on the picture that Mark is presenting to us around what is

unfolding in low- and middle-income and fragile states? And how do we – how do we make sure we don't lose sight of that? And how do we address and rise to that occasion? And I think we've had some great ideas around that.

And I want to come back to Senator Van Hollen and to Congressman Bera to offer a few more remarks, and then offer a chance for Mark Lowcock to complete the hour here. So back to you, Senator.

SEN. VAN HOLLEN:

Well, thank you. And, Henrietta, thank you for all your work at UNICEF. And I think you said it there with respect to speed and scale. And that is the challenge in terms of, you know, keeping the focus on addressing all the problems that are laid out in the Under-Secretary's report. I think, as Ami Bera and others have said, that there is a commitment here in the Congress, and I believe on a bipartisan basis, to providing some resources that are needed to address all the dimensions of the problem. Not just attacking the virus and stopping the spread, which is obviously of paramount importance, but also dealing with all the secondary and tertiary issues that the Under-Secretary has outlined.

So, look, this is going to require the incoming administration to make this a priority. I am absolutely confident that it is at the top of the list with respect to the new administration's priorities. Obviously a lot about what was discussed throughout the presidential campaign was the importance of a much more coordinated effort to address both the pandemic and also the economic fallout and other fallout from the pandemic here in the United States, but also recognizing – as this forum does – that this is a global challenge.

And so I do think that the tone will be set early on by the incoming administration about the need to reengage with the international community. And as, you know, the Under-Secretary mentioned, U.S. bioscience and pharmaceutical companies have been a big part of the engine with respect to the process of discovering the development of vaccines and therapeutics. And so it's important that we harness, you know, that effort as well on an international scale.

And finally, and Congressman Bera mentioned this as well, turning to the planning of what we have to do, both in the United States but of course globally, to, you know, be prepared. (Laughs.) Try to, you know, slow down, prevent frequency of future outbreaks and be much more prepared to catch them early on and respond more quickly, before a pandemic can wreak the kind of havoc it's done in this case. So that will be a priority for the incoming administration. And I think, you know, they're going to have a willing partner, I think, in a majority in the Congress on that goal.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you so much, Senator.

Congressman Bera?

REP. BERA:

Great. And I echo Senator Van Hollen's thanks for the work that you do, Henrietta.

You know, I think we have to keep an eye on making sure that the politics of how we move forward don't dissuade us. I know clearly President-elect Biden has a global view from his years as chair of Senate Foreign Relations, et cetera. But there's going to be such a domestic pressure to focus and address the domestic ills that we see here in the United States that we in Congress are going to have to continually make sure we do both. And you know that we're not just addressing our domestic food insecurity, and housing insecurity, and the economic challenge that, you know, the United States will face, but that we're using those tools in a strategic way to address the global issues as well, because they're not separate.

They're both intertwined, both defeating the virus globally but then also what that global economic recovery looks like when you're thinking about, again, the one-offs, the supply chain issues, and where we make investments. And at the global level, we'll be throwing hundreds of billions of dollars at defeating the virus and reviving the economy. Well, can we use those dollars in a strategic way, working with likeminded allies like Australia, Japan, Korea, the European Union, and others to go into developing – the developing world, to go into Africa and strategically, you know, not just defeat the virus but also create economies?

And, you know, lastly, you know, when we talk about the importance of women and girls, it is hugely important if we're talking about dealing with global fragility. The issue that if – you know, one of the core planks, as we think about unwinding some of the policies of the prior administration that really hindered our work, was women and girls. Can we focus in and put policies in place that empower those women, but also, you know, empower reproductive health, pregnancy spacing, and other issues that are so important to economic attainment? And I do think the right focus is on women and girls, and what that looks like as we address issues of food insecurity, as we address issues of global fragility.

So I think those are places where we'll certainly find allies and alignment with the Biden-Harris administration. And hopefully we can bring some of our Republican colleagues along so we can codify this in a bipartisan, bicameral way.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you, Congressman. We're getting towards the end here. I'm going to come back to Under-Secretary Lowcock in just a moment. I want to thank on our side Clifton Jones and John Monts who made this production possible. And we navigated some tough technical challenges. I didn't acknowledge the contribution and assistance that we received from Afreen Akhter on Senator Van Hollen's staff and Colleen Nguyen and Ryan Uyehara on Congressman Bera's staff, who were very kind and supportive in helping us pull this all together. I mentioned earlier today that Mia Beers from USAID, Lisa Carty from U.N. OCHA, terribly important in all of this.

Now, Under-Secretary Lowcock, this is the end of a 20-hour marathon for you today. This is the fifth stop after Geneva, Berlin, Brussels, London. You're still standing. You're still talking. It's amazing. And I'm sure you're going to deserve a bit of applause and some rest. But why don't you close with telling us what gives you the greatest hope? This is a difficult thing. You've painted – as you, yourself, said you've painted a bleak and dangerous situation. So what gives

you hope today? And what's the message we should carry away, because we don't want to end on a negative note. We want to end on a hopeful note.

MR. LOWCOCK:

Well, thank you very much, indeed. And, yes, I've done lots of events on this today. With enormous respect and gratitude to all my European and British friends, I do want to say this has been an incredibly important event for me because as I have said throughout, you know, if we are going to move forward in a positive way, all my experience tells me it will be because of what the U.S. is able in future convene – to convene and to get others to do.

You know, the last 50 years have been a transformational period for the experience of the average human being on the planet, a dramatic improvement way beyond anything in the previous 150,000 years of human history. And it's not difficult, actually, if we take a few of the right decisions to get back on a positive trajectory. So what I draw hope from is the commitment we've heard in meetings like this today, and the knowledge that we've done much harder things in the past and we can get back on a positive trajectory to build a fairer, safer, better planet for all of us. So thank you.

MR. MORRISON:

Thank you all. Jake, did you have a closing thought?

MR. KURTZER:

Just to share that same thanks, and to echo what we – what I said at the start, which is that while there's been six or eight panelists at the event today we also see all the participants in the audience as part of this process. And I can only speak for the CSIS side, where we really appreciate the feedback and the engagement, taking the ideas that were presented by Henrietta, by Trey Hicks talking about the transformation at USAID, by Under-Secretary-General, and by our representatives in Congress, and coming back to us and working with us to come up with these kinds of solutions to – like Under-Secretary-General Lowcock said – to get us back on track as far as in 2021.

MR. MORRISON:

So with that, I think we are adjourned. I think we've completed this. This has been terrifically rich. And thanks to all of the speakers today for their generosity, and their insights, and their patience in all of this. So with that, thank you and we're adjourned.

(END)