



## From Science to Action

### S20 Information Session

The G20's science engagement group (S20) virtually gathered 160 scientists from G20 national science academies and other prestigious scientific institutions all around the world on Thursday, April 23 for an Information Session. The event offered an overview of the 2020 S20 overall theme and four sub-themes, introduced the Task Force Leads, and was followed by a Q&A.

The S20 contributes to Saudi Arabia's G20 Presidency by offering forward-looking science-driven solutions to the world's most urgent challenges. For this reason, the S20 has chosen 'Foresight: Science for Navigating Critical Transitions' as its overall theme for 2020, with the intent to highlight how science can be used as a tool to guide humanity through future uncertainties. The theme aims to capture Saudi Arabia's G20 Presidency agenda into an exemplary global dialogue – with topics that have a strong impact on the world's economic, societal and environmental stability.

Earlier in April, the G20 Presidency emphasized the importance of the S20 engagement group by echoing recommendations from the S20 COVID-19 statement to anchor policy development and decision making on scientific evidence, promote global collaboration and coordinated actions and muster global funding for goal-oriented basic and applied research on COVID-19. "The S20 promptly recognized the COVID-19 pandemic and issued a strong statement which has inspired the G20," said H.E. Dr. Fahad Almubarak, G20 Sherpa, in his opening remarks at the Information Session. "The G20 and S20 are very much aligned and agree that the global response to the COVID-19 has to be science-based, so we look forward to the S20's advice and rely heavily on this engagement group."

S20 Chair and President of King Abdulaziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) Dr. Anas Alfaris continued on the topic, "We, as humans, have failed in dealing with this pandemic. We were hindered by our failure to comprehend second, third and nth order effects and how these effects can reverberate. For the next few months, we will live in an uncertain or even chaotic world, and possibly at great costs. But we will still need foresight to anticipate the effects that will follow this crisis and to avoid the impacts of similar crises in the future."

Dr. Alfaris also pointed out that “the next several decades will witness a convergence of multiple transitions affecting our global society, critical among which are the future of human health, the sustainability of our resources and environment, and the digitalization of economies and communities. These transitions are occurring at unprecedented pace and the world’s leading economies – represented by the G20 countries – must have the foresight to alleviate system-level economic and societal disruptions that could ensue during these transitions.”

S20 Lead Organization representative and KAUST President Dr. Tony Chan explained that “given the multi-faceted role of scientists in modern society as researchers, innovators, mentors and teachers, it is only right that your voices should shape the global science agenda. The science community is fully aware of the power and limits of knowledge, so you are collectively in the best position to understand where we are, and what else we must learn to address questions of great importance to today’s and future society.”

Other keynote speakers included S20 Sherpa Dr. Amal Fatani, who charted the path forward for turning scientific issues into policies and actions, and the Task Force Leads, who outlined the motivation and scope for their respective themes. The event was moderated by S20 Chief Advocacy Officer Yara Al-Rajeh, who highlighted the importance of engaging the wider science community to build local and international consensus.

Led by four distinguished Saudi scientists, the S20 Task Forces examine the three key priorities for the S20 and their potential synergies and interconnections at the systems level. These priorities both individually and synergistically impact global economic, societal and environmental stability. They are; ‘Future of Health: Preventing Pandemics and Expanding Personalized Healthcare’ led by Prof. Aws Alshamsan, ‘Circular Economy: Holistic Solutions for Our Environment’ by Prof. Yousef Al-Yousef and ‘Digital Revolution: Achieving Universal Connectivity and Smarter Communities’ by Prof. Tareq Al-Naffouri. A fourth task force, ‘Connecting the Dots: From Science to Action’ is led by Dr. Ali Almeshari and will examine system-level synergies between the three key priority areas.

After several months of discussions amongst the task force members and consultations with global partners, everyone will gather again for a follow-up dialogue at the S20 Workshop in July 2020. The global effort will culminate at the main event – the S20 Summit, to be held on September 25-26 at King Abdullah University of Science and Technology (KAUST) in Thuwal, Jeddah.

Are you an expert in one of the S20 themes and interested in joining a S20 task force? Visit the S20 website and apply; [www.s20saudiArabia.org.sa](http://www.s20saudiArabia.org.sa).