PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2021

PL3

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE: ENSURING THE WORLD WILL NEVER BE VULNERABLE TO ANOTHER ‘COVID-19’ THREAT

| BACKGROUND

The ongoing COVID-19 pandemic has laid bare our collective weaknesses in being able to effectively respond to the emergence of a highly contagious and lethal microbial threat. Despite extraordinary advances over the past century in science and unprecedented improvement in global health standards, as evidenced by the COVID-19 pandemic, we still live in a world where the threat an infectious agent can emerge without warning and spread rapidly to every community and every household without regard to national borders or to social and economic standing.

Over the course of the remainder of this century, the likely frequency of epidemics and pandemics will continue to increase, driven to a large extent by demographic trends, including urbanization, and environmental degradation and climate change, persistent social and economic inequalities, and globalized trade and travel. The burden of these diseases is not equally distributed across the world; the economically disenfranchised, displaced populations and people living with pre-existing conditions are disproportionately impacted.

Importantly, the drivers underlying the emergence of novel disease threats are complex human behaviors and their impact on animal populations and the environment are understood to be central to their emergence. Changing environmental and climatic conditions have been closely linked to the emergence of novel infectious diseases and the redistribution of those already existing. Their aggregate impact will continue to increase.

While the upgrading of the health security apparatus over the last decade has been welcomed COVID-19 underscores that these processes and institutional arrangements are not sufficient to responding to events such as those caused by SARS-COV 2. Compliance with the International Health Regulations (2005) that provide a normative framework for surveillance, preparedness, notification and international support and coordination has also been shown to be inadequate. The experience of the COVID-19 pandemic underscores that new efforts need to be made to craft global strategies, policies and regulatory frameworks that more directly address the multi-sectoral aspects of disease emergence in order to improve our collective capacities to prevent, detect and respond to threats. Key is strengthening of multi-sectoral systems, increasing policy coherence, including in health technologies access and innovation, and reducing risks of new disease threats.

The failure of the world's response to the COVID-19 pandemic, however, is not simply about the virus's biology and its ecology, nor the inadequacies of our multi-sectoral partnerships. The erosion of support for multilateral institutions and partnerships, a growing mistrust between citizens and their leaders, the increase in 'nationalism' and the rise of "anti-science" have further complicated the ability of nations to mount an effective coordinated global response to global events like COVID-19. We need to thoughtfully examine the causes underlying these trends, including the expanding impact of social media, if we are to understand their impact on our inability to mount an effective response to the COVID-19 pandemic; and based on this insight we urgently need new strategies to re-invigorate our commitment to multilateral partnerships, build more trustful relationships between governments and their citizens, improve global solidarity and re-affirm the centrality of evidence-based solutions to future threats.

| OBJECTIVES

Plenary 3 will explore what strategies and actions are required to ensure the world is better prepared to prevent, detect, respond and recover from future emerging disease threats.



Keynote

David Cameron

Former Prime Minister of the United Kingdom

The Office of David Cameron
United Kingdom

One of the most prominent global influencers of the early 21st Century, David Cameron served as Prime Minister of the United Kingdom from 2010 to 2016, leading Britain's first Coalition Government in nearly 70 years and, at the 2015 General Election, forming the first majority Conservative Government in the UK for over two decades.

As the UK's youngest Prime Minister in two centuries, he came to power at a moment of economic crisis. Under his leadership, the UK's economy was transformed. The deficit was reduced by over two-thirds; one million businesses set-up; a record number of jobs were created; and Britain became the fastest-growing major advanced economy in the world. That created the stability David needed to cut taxes, introduce a National Living Wage, transform education, reform welfare, protect the National Health Service, and increase pensions.

Internationally, David Cameron developed a foreign policy in the post-Iraq era that addressed the new challenges of the Arab Spring, as well as a more aggressive Russia, while ensuring Britain played a full role in the global fight against ISIS. Following hosting the successful London 2012 Olympic and Paralympic Games, David chaired the 2013 G8 Summit at Lough Erne in Northern Ireland, where he highlighted the global need for fair taxes, increased transparency and open trade. He later helped re-write the global goals on aid and sustainable development.

Elected Leader of the Conservative Party in 2005 to reform and modernise a party that had lost three elections in a row, David successfully remodelled the Conservative Party with a new and distinct modern, compassionate agenda – and that is how he governed. He led the way internationally by passing the UK's Same Sex Marriage Act; and offered constitutional referenda on Scotland's place within the United Kingdom, and on the United Kingdom's place within the European Union.

David continues to focus on issues he advanced while in office: supporting life chances for young people; championing Britain's cutting-edge medical research; and promoting international development. He is Chairman of Patrons at National Citizen Service, the UK's flagship youth development programme; President of Alzheimer's Research UK; and co-chairs the Council on State Fragility, under the auspices of the International Growth Centre. He also serves as an Honorary Governor at The Ditchley Foundation; is a Board member of the ONE Campaign; and together with former US Secretary of State, John Kerry, co-chairs Pew Bertarelli Ocean Ambassadors.

Further to these roles, David is advising and working with a number of international businesses, all concentrating on innovative technology-driven sectors, including Fin-Tech, Medi-Tech and AI.

David and his wife, Samantha, have three young children: Nancy, Elwen, and Florence, who was born in 2010 while her father was Prime Minister. Very sadly their much-loved eldest child, Ivan, who suffered from cerebral palsy and Ohtahara Syndrome, a rare and severe form of epilepsy, died in February 2009, aged six.

The family live in London and West Oxfordshire in the United Kingdom.