PMAC PRINCE MAHIDOL AWARD CONFERENCE 2021

WS301

ACCELERATING ADVANCES IN SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGIES TO "PREVENT, DETECT, RESPOND TO AND RECOVER FROM" FUTURE THREATS

| BACKGROUND

The COVID-19 pandemic has dramatically illustrated our collective vulnerability when we lack readily available biomedical countermeasures and interventions to control a novel threat. Our limited capacity to create these responses de novo compounds the problem. There is an urgent need to expand our knowledge about future viral threats BEFORE they directly threaten us, and to have in hand tools and capabilities to respond rapidly upon their onset. Our investments must move beyond advancing science and technology alone, but also focus on the processes and systems that link these advances to policy making. Despite extraordinary achievements over the past decades, particularly in the areas of genomics, big data and artificial intelligence, the sciences associated with pandemics and epidemics have largely remained outliers. We also lack understanding of the ecological and climate-related drivers that will contribute to future pandemics and/or epidemics. There have been few notable advances in our ability to forecast future outbreaks or reduce the likelihood of future 'spillovers', and early detection and rapid response remain great challenges. Globally, we still have an inadequate capabilities and capacities to generate new biomedical countermeasures and interventions that are broadly applicable across viral and bacterial populations and available prior to a pandemic and/or epidemic and readily available to support a rapid response.

| OBJECTIVES

This session will explore the following questions:

- How can key technologies that have a place in addressing epidemic and pandemic threats shift from their current reactive use to a far more proactive approach?
- What is the role of 'big data' and artificial intelligence in harnessing scientific innovation for forecasting and responding to pandemics and epidemics?
- What is the role of climate and weather as drivers of pandemics and/or epidemics, and how can we integrate climate and/or weather information and data into health tools or systems to prepare for future health challenges?
- What systems, processes and institutional capacities are required to ensure that advances made in scientific knowledge and technologies are appropriately incorporated into policies and practices for maximum impact?
- How can we collectively benefit and use evidence from research and development on diagnostics, vaccines, and therapeutics to improve their availability and accessibility for present and future threats?



Moderator

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Cecilia Oh is the Programme Advisor at the HIV, Health and Development Group of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), based at the UNDP Bangkok Regional Hub, Thailand. Since 2014, she has coordinated the Access and Delivery Partnership, a global project led by UNDP in collaboaration with TDR, WHO and PATH, and aimed at supporting low- and middle-income countries to reinforce their health systems through strengthened institutions and human capacities. Prior to this, Ms Oh was an independent consultant on development, trade and intellectual property issues. In 2010, she was appointed Adjunct Associate Professor at Duke University's Global Health Institute, where she worked with the Program on Global Health and Technology Access on global health policy issues. From 2006-2008, Ms Oh was the Trade Policy Advisor for the Asia-Pacific region, based at the UNDP Regional Centre in Colombo. Ms Oh was previously also at the WHO, with the global technical cooperation programme on trade agreements, intellectual property rights and public health. Prior to joining the WHO, she was a Senior Researcher and Legal Advisor of the Third World Network in Geneva, where she worked on international trade, environment and development issues.