

Has coronavirus killed globalisation: speech by Laura Clarke

E ngā mana, e ngā reo, e ngā iwi, e rau rangatira mā, tēnā koutou katoa.

Thank you Maty and Diplosphere for the invitation to speak tonight, and for convening such an interesting group of people. I don't know about everyone here, but for me COVID-19 was only really in my peripheral vision at the start of the year – and then moved fast to become the central preoccupation. So conversations like this are more important than ever.

The death and disruption caused by the novel coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic is unprecedented in our lifetimes. It is a truly global crisis: with over 9 million cases worldwide, over 475,000 deaths, and a devastating impact on our economies and way of life.

But has it – as Maty challenges us – killed globalisation? Has it killed the instinct – at the individual, business and state level – to live, work and travel internationally, to trade across borders, to co-operate in tackling global challenges and pursuing common goods?

Or has it instead changed the nature of globalisation, accelerated geopolitical trends that were already underway, and made international co-operation on global goods even harder than it was before?

I'm going to say, straight away, that I think the answer is b). COVID hasn't killed globalisation – but it has made the world a far more dangerous place, and changed how we work, and think, internationally.

So, I'm going to focus on what I see as the risks and opportunities posed by COVID-19 to our globalised world. I'm going to set out a bleak view – sorry – in which the risks far outweigh the opportunities. But then I'm going to try – good internationalist that I am, to outline where we have had successes to date, where there are opportunities, and how we can best seize them.

Risks posed by COVID-19

The glass half empty view is pretty stark. Countries have closed their borders to protect against COVID, international aviation has all but fallen off a cliff; and international meeting after international meeting is being cancelled or postponed: this week was supposed to be the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Kigali, Rwanda.

We are seeing an increase in protectionism. Switzerland's University of St Gallen found in April that 75 countries had introduced export curbs on medical supplies, equipment or medicines this year. And of course the economic impact of COVID on lives and livelihoods around the world is staggering. The IMF is predicting a 5% global contraction, with no country unscathed.

But the impacts are even more significant – and devastating – in the developing world. After years of progress in lifting people out of poverty –from 44% of people living in global extreme poverty in 1981, to 8% in 2019 – that progress is going to be dramatically reversed. The World Bank assesses that COVID-19 could push upwards of 71 million people into extreme poverty in 2020.

And the full impact of COVID on the most vulnerable has yet to be seen. In May, coronavirus reached Cox's Bazaar, the world's largest refugee camp in Bangladesh. The UN warns that Yemen's healthcare system has "in effect collapsed". Closer to home, Pacific Island countries have succeeded in preventing large scale outbreaks of COVID-19, but are feeling the extreme impacts of the loss of tourism and remittances.

COVID-19 will hit the poorest the hardest.

COVID will also lead to greater instability in some places; in others it will strengthen the strongman. It risks accelerating the decline of the primacy of liberal states within the international order, and strengthening those who cast issues such as human rights, freedom from surveillance, and freedom of the media as 'nice to have's', rather than the essential underpinning of our democracies.

It is exacerbating US-China tensions, accelerating the US withdrawal from its global leadership role, and providing opportunity to hostile states, and those who do not share our values or view of the world.

And there is a serious risk that the urgent climate action that is needed falls into that same bracket of 'nice to have' and 'non-essential'.

So far, so gloomy.

So, let me turn to the glass half full.

Opportunities

A global pandemic requires a global response, and the UK – despite our challenges with COVID-19 at home – has prioritised the international response from the start.

Let me talk about vaccine diplomacy, and our support for the most vulnerable countries.

On vaccine diplomacy, the UK in May co-hosted the Global Coronavirus Response Initiative alongside the European Commission, and eight other countries. The event raised £7 billion for research and development on vaccines, therapeutics and diagnostics, with the UK committing £318 million.

In June the UK hosted the Global Vaccine Summit, with nations pledging \$8.8 billion to GAVI, the Global Vaccine Alliance, to immunise 300 million children in the poorest countries by 2025. New Zealand has contributed \$15 million for international research collaboration and a further \$7 million

GAVI.

Together, we are driving unprecedented global collaboration and resourcing for the development and delivery of new vaccines, treatments and tests at the speed and scale required, to make them available not only in our own communities, but all around the world.

On vulnerable countries, the UK has led international efforts to support the most vulnerable. We have provided £5.5 billion in financial support to the most vulnerable; we have worked with G20 partners to suspend \$12 billion of debt payments for the 77 poorest countries in the world; and we are the largest funder of the International Development Assistance Programme, which is delivering major development programmes in the Pacific.

There are positive glimmers on trade, too. I spoke earlier about the rise in protectionism, but should also highlight the efforts – with New Zealand playing a leading role – to keep trade routes and supply chains open. The UK, like New Zealand, is committed to tackling protectionism, and working with our partners to support free, fair, rules-based international trade.

And we were delighted to launch UK-New Zealand free trade agreement negotiations last week: beginning a new chapter in UK-NZ co-operation.

Our FTA launch was done virtually, which segues into my next theme: the role that technology is playing in the changing nature of globalisation.

COVID-19 has accelerated a behavioural shift in how we work. We can do many of the same international meetings from in front of our bookshelves at home, rather than with long-haul travel. This change is, perhaps, the logical continuation of globalisation. But the pandemic has accelerated its progress, and this could – potentially – become a leveller.

And as we all fly less, our aviation emissions decrease – perhaps by as much as 50% in 2020. Which brings me to my final source of optimism: the opportunity to forge a green recovery from COVID-19.

In recovering from COVID, each country will face a choice, between laying the foundations for sound, sustainable and inclusive growth, or locking-in a high carbon trajectory. As we borrow against our children's future, we must ensure that we have their interests – and that of this planet – at heart.

We must collectively support a green and resilient recovery, building on the principles of the Paris Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals. The economic prize on offer is clear. Renewable energy sources such as solar and wind are already cheaper than coal in most countries. And the International Renewable Energy Agency assess that boosting investment in renewables would increase jobs in this sector to 42 million globally by 2050.

The UK, as the incoming COP26 President, hosting in partnership with Italy, will continue to press for greater ambition around the world – to reduce emissions, to build resilience, and to cooperate and support each other in a green recovery.

So, to conclude. We are living in times of great uncertainty, and great disruption. No one knows when a vaccine will be found, and when we will return to anything like normal. The challenge facing us – in terms of the global health response, supporting the most vulnerable, and guarding against those who would seek to take advantage of the pandemic, to the detriment of our security and way of life – is enormous. The outlook is bleak.

And humans are, generally, slow to adapt our behaviours. But COVID-19 and its response showed us just how fast we can move – at governmental, business and individual level – to change our policies at pace, to change our behaviours. If we can do it in the face of COVID-19, we should be able to do it for the climate, too.

Tēnā koutou, tēnā koutou, tēnā tatou katoa.

[£400 million boost to regional R&D projects across the UK](#)

Press release

Seven major research and innovation projects across the UK have today received over £400 million in government and industry funding.



- Over £400 million of funding to back cutting-edge R&D projects across the UK – creating thousands of jobs
- projects to develop autonomous and electric vehicles in South Wales and zero-emissions tech in Northern Ireland set to benefit
- funding marks the latest step towards reaching the government's target to invest 2.4% of GDP in UK research and development

Seven major research and innovation projects across the UK have today (Friday 26 June) received over £400 million in government and industry funding.

Businesses and universities in Glasgow, Edinburgh, Belfast, Cardiff, Bristol,

Liverpool and Kent are all set to benefit, ensuring projects such as zero-emissions tech for maritime vessels, smart-packaging to cut food waste, and new health products to combat infections get the investment they need to take off.

Each programme will deliver long-term economic benefits in every part of the United Kingdom, creating thousands of jobs, new skills, and encouraging more competitive and future-proof industries as our economy recovers from the coronavirus pandemic.

This latest investment is part of [UK Research and Innovation's](#) (UKRI) flagship [Strength in Places Fund](#), which aims to support promising research and innovation projects that will drive local economic growth. Projects announced today will receive a share of £186 million of government investment, backed by a further £230 million from private firms and research institutions.

Business Secretary Alok Sharma said:

Today's announcement will ensure some of our country's most promising R&D projects get the investment they need to take off and thrive.

Working with the private sector our world-class universities, we're backing new and innovative ideas that will create jobs and boost skills in every part of the UK for years to come.

The 7 projects across the UK receiving funding today are:

- £44 million for a consortium led by [Cardiff University](#), to group capabilities in South Wales developing technologies in areas such as communications, 5G, innovative vehicles and medical devices
- £114 million for a consortium led by the [Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine](#), which is ensuring innovative, new healthcare products and solutions to combat human infections are made available in the North West faster and cheaper. This could help simplify diagnosis, reduce the need to draw blood and risks from contaminated needles
- £55 million for a consortium led by the [University of Edinburgh](#) to fund research to understand financial behaviours and address financial challenges such as fair access to credit, property ownership and saving
- £46 million for a consortium led by the [University of Bristol](#) to support new digital formats in film making in the South West including new experiences across fiction, documentary, games and live performance
- £33 million for a consortium led by the [National Institute of Agriculture Botany EMR](#) at East Malling to increase investment in emerging technologies such as Artificial Intelligence (AI), automation and smart-packaging for food production to help improve efficiencies and reduce waste
- £91 million for a consortium led by the [University of Glasgow](#) to translate new approaches in precision medicine into real-world settings,

which will allow doctors to select treatments for patients based on a disease's genetics

- £63 million for a consortium led by [Artemis Technologies Ltd](#) to develop zero-emissions technologies in Northern Ireland for the introduction of wind-electric hybrids for maritime vessels, including a new zero emissions water taxi scheme

The announcement also follows the government doubling investment in its [Fast Start Competition](#) to £40 million to drive forward new technological advances and support the UK's next generation of innovative businesses.

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[Health Secretary calls on country to get tested as access is expanded even further](#)

- Access to coronavirus testing increased further with six new 'walk through' local testing sites in England offering appointments to people without cars
- The number of mobile testing units will double to 236 by the end of July and new priority postboxes for testing kits created
- Health Secretary calls on everyone across the country with symptoms to get their free test, and help stop the spread of the virus

Coronavirus testing has been made even easier and more accessible, the Health Secretary announced today.

Six new 'walk through' local testing sites are now offering appointments to people in England, with the capacity to test hundreds of people each day and are all easily accessible by foot or on a bike.

Three months since the first regional drive through test site was set up in Nottingham, there are now 68 such sites across the country, alongside 6 new walk-through sites in England, new mobile testing units, and special home test postboxes for safe and easy returns.

Free and accessible testing is a cornerstone of the new NHS Test and Trace service, which is working to stop the spread of coronavirus in local communities and to support the lifting of restrictions so people can see more of their friends and family, help businesses get back on their feet and get people back in jobs. The NHS Test and Trace service has identified 113,925 people as recent close contacts since the service began on 28 May 2020.

The new walk-through sites will bring testing to the heart of communities, by focusing on offering appointments to people without cars who can safely travel on foot, without coming into contact with others. These sites will continue to be expanded where there is demand from local communities and will provide a convenient option, close to where people live and work.

Health and Social Care Secretary Matt Hancock said:

It has never been easier to get a free coronavirus test, and our new walk-in centres are yet another way to get one.

If you have symptoms, however mild, please get tested now to help stop the spread of the virus and protect the people around you.

The biggest network of diagnostic testing in UK history is ready and able to offer a test to anyone, anywhere in the country. In England, NHS Test and Trace is there to help those testing positive to trace their recent contacts and advise those at risk to stay at home, ultimately saving lives.

It is encouraging to see transmission of the virus is going down, but we all still have a part to play to limit this further. Getting tested as soon as you develop symptoms is an essential step to protect the most vulnerable and help us to safely ease lockdown measures.

Home testing kits can now be returned without booking a courier service, allowing those choosing this testing option to post their testing kits at any of the 30,000 Royal Mail priority postboxes across the UK, which will all be marked by a regionalised NHS logo by 3 July.

In addition to this, 30 additional mobile testing units are now travelling the UK, responding to increased regional demand for testing, and supporting hard to reach areas. Mobile testing enables temporary testing sites to be set up quickly to serve communities on a rolling basis and target specific demand. This brings the total of mobile units to 147, currently staffed by military personnel in England, Scotland and Wales and by civilian staff in Northern Ireland. This number will further increase to 236 across the United Kingdom by the end of July.

Specialised translation services will soon be offered across a range of 68 drive-through testing sites, to support people who don't speak English as their first language such as Urdu, Punjabi, Bengali, Gujarati, Mandarin, Polish, and British Sign Language for people with hearing difficulties.

The expansion of testing announced today supports the existing NHS or Public Health England (PHE) infrastructure, which has more than doubled its testing capacity since the coronavirus pandemic began, and supports our commitment to expand local direction of national testing resources and move to a more locally owned and delivered testing model.

The Lighthouse labs were created at the same time existing NHS England or PHE lab capacity was expanded, which allowed NHS capacity to be reserved to test patients and NHS staff while testing eligibility was broadened out through the lighthouse labs. This has meant we have always had the ability to test patients and were able to widen tests to staff, key workers and eventually everyone.

Across the UK testing capacity has been expanded to more than 200,000 tests a day, meaning that anyone with symptoms can immediately book a test for free. Local authorities in England will have greater autonomy to deliver different types of testing models which are suited to the needs of their population and local communities.

Anyone with symptoms of coronavirus – a high temperature, a new, continuous cough, or a loss or change to your sense of smell or taste – should book a test immediately.

In England, anyone testing positive will be contacted by NHS Test and Trace, to help them trace their recent contacts and further control the spread of the virus.

NHS Test and Trace is central to the government's coronavirus recovery strategy. To stop the spread of the virus, everyone will need to play their part by isolating if symptomatic, booking a test as soon as possible, and if asked to do so, identifying their close contacts. This is the best way to enable life to return to as close to normal as possible, for as many people as possible, in a way that is safe and protects our NHS and social care.

Everyone with symptoms can book or order a free test at nhs.uk/coronavirus or by calling 119. Essential workers and members of their households can [access priority testing on GOV.UK](#).

The government has put in place the largest network of diagnostic testing facilities in British history spanning the whole of the UK, including 68 drive-through sites, 147 mobile testing units, home testing and satellite kits and 3 mega laboratories.

We have already carried out more than 8.5 million coronavirus tests since the pandemic began. The majority of tests at regional testing centres and mobile testing units are returned within 24 hours, with 90% returned within 48 hours.

In addition to the 68 drive-through regional testing sites across the UK, there are now 6 walk-through local testing sites in Newcastle, Rochdale, Leeds, Brent, Newham and Slough offering appointments to people without cars, and with Slough being the first hybrid drive and walk-through site.

See more information on [visiting a local test site](#)

147 mobile testing units are now travelling the UK, with the total number reaching 236 by the end of July. The mobile units can be requested by local councils in England in response to increased local demand, to protect against regional transmission of the virus, and offer both drive and walk through

services. The devolved administrations manage the tasking of their mobile testing units.

A home test user can [check where their nearest priority postbox is](#). A process of marking all priority postboxes with stickers has also begun across England, Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.

Anyone who receives a home testing kit will also receive instructions about how to return the kit safely, including wiping down the box with an antiseptic wipe, following social distancing guidelines and wearing a mask when posting the kit.

Anyone who is shielding, vulnerable or too unwell to leave the home can still use the courier service or call the customer contact centre for further help.

[UK Export Finance publishes its 2019-20 results and new Business Plan.](#)

- Results show UKEF provided £4.4 billion in support for UK exports to 69 countries
- 77% of the companies UKEF directly supported were SMEs, 88% of which were based outside of London
- UKEF's new Business Plan sets out how it will increase its support to UK exporters and suppliers

UK Export Finance (UKEF) has today [published its results for 2019 to 2020](#), revealing it provided £4.4 billion in support for UK exports, helping UK companies trade with 69 countries.

UKEF supported 339 companies in 2019-20, up 29% on the previous year, with a sharp increase in companies in supply chains indirectly benefiting from UKEF support. 77% of the companies UKEF supported were SMEs, and 88% of these were based outside London as the department works with companies across the UK.

Businesses that benefited from UKEF support include Environmental Street furniture, a Belfast firm selling street furniture to the Dubai Arena, Tall Group, a printing company in Runcorn selling secure high school certificates to the Kenyan National Examination Council and IQA group, a Glasgow-based utilities contractor helping Angola improve its national power supply.

In the year the UK hosted the UK-Africa Investment Summit to strengthen trade ties with the continent, UKEF has seen significant growth in its support for UK exports to Africa. UKEF provided £780 million of support to facilitate UK exports to the continent, up from £625 million last year and rising from just £85 million five years ago. This included £110 million in financing for a new maternity hospital in Ghana that will help reduce infant mortality rates in

the south of the country.

Secretary of State for International Trade, Liz Truss, said:

This has been another outstanding year for UK Export Finance, helping businesses in every part of the UK win export contracts.

Supporting international trade will be crucial as the UK looks to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. UK Export Finance is already playing a critical role at the centre of the government's plan to power an export-led recovery and its offer is more important than ever for UK exporters.

UKEF has today also launched its [2020 to 2024 Business Plan](#) which sets out how the department will meet the challenges in providing export credit and trade finance support over the next four years, particularly as the UK recovers from the impact of COVID-19.

The Business Plan outlined new objectives that will allow UKEF to adapt its support for SMEs, help businesses across all the regions of the UK access UKEF products, and focus its activity on sectors and countries where UKEF support will have the greatest economic benefit. This includes plans to further develop its support for clean growth and renewable energy business by building on the £2 billion recently allocated to UKEF's direct lending facility for clean growth projects.

Marcus Dolman, Co-Chairman of the British Exporters' Association (BExA) welcomed the results and said:

BExA welcomes the positive figures announced by UKEF today, which show a marked increase in business volumes compared with previous years and we commend UKEF for their continued support of UK exporters.

UKEF is a critical resource for UK exporters and their importance will be amplified this year in supporting businesses through the current crisis. We praise their enthusiasm and ingenuity in developing new products and services. We particularly look forward to the new schemes that are under development being made available to all exporters imminently and see this as a real game changer in the support of UK exports.

Notes to editors: UKEF 2019 to 2020 highlights

- UKEF's support is provided on a commercial basis in partnership with over 100 private sector providers and the department charges a premium to cover its costs and the risk it takes on. In 2019-20, UKEF generated more than £177 million in premium income for the Exchequer.

- This year UKEF supported its first ever offshore-wind projects in 2019-2020, enabling British companies to win contracts on the Formosa 2, Changfang and Xidao wind farms in the Taiwan Strait with more than £300 million of support.
- UKEF support in 2019-2020 extended to Jaguar Land Rover, one of the country's major exporters. UKEF guaranteed a £500 million loan to support the company's continued investment into research and development of its electric vehicles – the first deal for UKEF of this kind, with UKEF's support tied to Jaguar Land Rover's overall working capital needs instead of a specific export contract.

Read our [2019 to 2020 Performance Highlights](#) and the [Annual Report and Accounts](#).

Find out more about our [2020 to 2024 Business Plan](#).

[Achieving the goals of the peace agreement in Afghanistan](#)

Thank you very much, Madam President. Let me also welcome today our briefers, SRSG Lyons and Executive Director Waly, who I think are making their first appearances in their new roles.

Madam President, there are two preeminent priorities facing Afghanistan today: pursuing peace and tackling the COVID-19 pandemic.

On peace, let me say how much the United Kingdom welcomes the progress made towards intra-Afghan negotiations since our last meeting. These will be Afghan-owned and Afghan-led negotiations. And for the United Kingdom's part, we stand ready support in any way we can. And we note with appreciation the United Nations' readiness to do likewise.

What is most crucial, Madam President, is that they start and they start without delay.

Now, the political agreement between President Ghani and Chairman Abdullah in May was an important and welcome step in this direction. The government has shown strong, unified leadership in its commitment to the release of Taliban prisoners. More of this strong, unified leadership will be essential for the next stage of the peace process and also to address the COVID-19 pandemic, to which I will return. I would like to urge President Ghani and Chairman Abdullah to finalise the formation and appointments of the new government quickly.

Madam President, the Taliban too, must show that they are a credible partner for peace. We welcome that they have released prisoners as well and remain committed to negotiations. However, the United Kingdom condemns in the strongest terms the recent upswing in violence, for which the Taliban is primarily responsible and which undermines trust in the Taliban's sincerity about peace.

The United Kingdom's message to the Taliban is threefold:

First, reduce violence now. Previous occasions – most recently, the Eid ceasefire – shows that you, the Taliban, are capable of doing so. The question is one of willingness.

Second, fulfil the commitment to counter-terrorism, break completely with all terrorist groups, including al-Qaeda, and condemn all acts of terrorism in Afghanistan.

And third, engage in good faith in the upcoming intra-Afghan negotiations. This includes accepting the inclusive negotiating team of the Afghan Government.

My final remark on peace is to restate the centrality of inclusion and human rights to peace. I know that Ms Akbar said that this is not an optional 'nice to have'. This is at the core of Afghans' aspirations for a lasting peace in their country. That means that any peace settlement must protect and build on the progress made in recent years, including on freedom of religion and belief, freedom of expression and the rights of women, minorities and children. And let me record the United Kingdom's strong support for the conclusions on children in armed conflict in Afghanistan this Council adopted last week.

Women's effective and meaningful participation in the peace process and in governance is particularly important. And as Co-Chair of the Group of Friends of Women in Afghanistan, the United Kingdom remains and will remain a strong advocate for women at and in all levels of decision-making.

Madam President, all of this is happening against the backdrop of the Global COVID-19 pandemic. We share the deep concern about the pandemic's impact in Afghanistan – both the immediate health impacts and the secondary socio-economic effects. The United Kingdom is already providing assistance to implement the most urgent parts of the United Nations' humanitarian response plan and to provide water, food and sanitation.

As one of the largest international donors in Afghanistan, we're also working closely with Finland and UNAMA, co-organisers of the Ministerial Pledging Conference due to take place in November this year. The international donor community must redouble its efforts to ensure that support is available and channelled effectively to help Afghanistan weather the pandemic and build back better on a long-term, sustainable footing.

Madam President, there is no doubt that these challenges are daunting. But at a time when the world is united in common cause to fight COVID-19, Afghans

have an unparalleled opportunity to unite in securing lasting peace and security in Afghanistan. It is, of course, for Afghans to seize that opportunity and for this Council, the United Nations and Afghanistan's friends to provide all the support that we can. And the United Kingdom is committed to doing our part.

Thank you very much, Madam President.