

Vision20 Panel for G20 meeting

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WHY POLITICS NEEDS STRATEGIC FORESIGHT FOR BETTER GOVERNANCE.

Politics has a critical role in transmitting a new vision that identifies the main global challenges. It also signals a road to deal with critical problems and improve global governance. Global governance requires collaboration among nations and governability in each nation - governability meaning a capacity to implement reforms and achieve changes with institutional stability. Only those countries that have internal stability and cohesion can contribute to global governance.

REINFORCING THE STUDY OF FUTURE SCENARIOS WILL IMPROVE POLITICAL ACTION

Most discussions on how to implement proposals for solving global and national challenges end up in transferring responsibilities to governments and politicians. How to endow politics with foresight and strategic elements that could be relevant for identifying options and illuminate decision making?

Politicians may react favorably to the following arguments

- The analysis of global trends, drivers and game changers, in a systematic and continuous manner, provides political actors important elements to articulate a narrative, a vision, a long-term view. **Politics requires a narrative, which values and cultivates what priorities to choose, what policies to apply.**

- **There is no one narrative.** Within each country and among different countries there are different narratives, according to geographic, social and economic point of reference. There are different narratives between progressives and conservatives, rich and poor, US and China. **Politics does not consist of converging or imposing one vision, but to manage different ones, conciliate them and explore common grounds.**
- Foresight studies help to **anticipate risks and opportunities**, Politicians and public opinion are prone to react to risks. Alarms and opportunities are good stimulus for action and serve to improve the quality of public policies.
- Exploring alternative scenarios allows us to detect critical issues, identify preferred trajectories and their implications for action. It is a useful political tool for **promoting the discussion of national strategies.**
- As **national decisions are increasingly conditioned by international factors, scenario analysis helps us to open minds to global and long-term trends.** National strategies should not be limited to domestic and short-term criteria. Observing other´s experiences and detecting new phenomena and weak signals on time can help to design better policies and to call for public - private and multilateral collaboration.
- Foresight studies and long-term goals **stimulate political dialogue among diverse political and social actors** and facilitate the search of common grounds for consensus building.
- Foresight requires a qualitative and multidisciplinary approach, open debates and information. This enhances interactions among different experts and social groups, and it helps to reduce uncertainties, fragmentation and fear. **Foresight contributes to**

convergence, collaboration and to think differently about the future.

- Civil society organizations and broader groups of citizens should be better prepared for proposing strategic ideas and initiatives that influence government decision making. Decentralization and local debates also heighten innovation. **The spread of ideas about the future is critical for gaining political support.**
- **Political parties will benefit** from debating future challenges and options and defining future goals. They could **design better programs and transmit motivating messages** to society that could arise interest to participate.

EMERGING COUNTRIES SUCH AS LATIN AMERICA NEED TO STRENGTHEN THEIR FORESIGHT CAPACITY AND VISION FOR IMPROVING NATIONAL GOVERNABILITY

- **Political activity is deployed essentially within each nation.** Therefore, to strengthen the quality of political action, foresight and strategic capacity should be improved in all countries.
- **Developed countries have institutions and a long practice** (methodologies and contents) in foresight studies, global, national, sectoral and regional. **Emerging countries and Latin America have not yet evolved from traditional planning to prospective and strategic thinking.** There is a lack of specialized and stable institutions. Some groups produce occasional reports, usually intermittent and disconnected from decision making. Often existing groups are weakened or dismantled when governments change.

How to organize a national capacity?

- Our knowledge of successful experiences (Inter-American Dialogue) suggests the advantage of organizing **a coordinated system that includes the Executive (central units, ministries and services) Parliament, regions and provinces, universities and companies.**
- Best results come out from work groups that study specific issues and **include public and private actors.** They usually show stability and have closer links with decision makers.
- **A central government unit is needed.** It should coordinate the foresight units existing in different branches of government, to avoid dispersion. It should be placed **close to the President or Prime Minister.** This unit should act as an advisory body, not as a Ministry that competes with others. It should provide a framework and establish priorities.
- Success will depend on the ability to **link trends and strategies with short term decisions.** A decoupling between the two will hinder progress. Foresight analysis is aimed to improve decision making now, it must illuminate the present.
- **Visioning and thinking future should be spread** in all relevant political, economic, social and environmental institutions and large companies. A seed should be planted in each of those spaces. The aim should be should to gradually achieve new way of thinking for more efficient action.
- Governments, national and local, should **promote public dialogue with social organizations,** keeping citizen´s informed, and carry consultations that motivate innovation and develop strategic thinking. Such dialogues create a sense of community and a need to collaborate. Without them studies end up in a drawer.

- **Strategic foresight should be focused on the Agenda 2030** and thus enhance global and national change and global governance.

MAIN GLOBAL AND NATIONAL CHALLENGES

HOW TO ACHIEVE PROSPERITY, SOCIAL RESILIENCE AND DEMOCRATIC STABILITY.

Global trends and drivers unveil scenarios characterized by

- ✓ **economic inequality /social fragmentation/political conflict. Existing inequalities tend to increase** when new technologies expand. Most studies on future jobs show trends that favor those handling digital skills and harm those in routine jobs. Additionally, new demands from medium income sectors are growing. **Citizen’s empowerment, communication technologies, education will augment people’s influence and involvement.** Consciousness is growing for new economic, social, political and cultural rights, women, indigenous peoples, diversity. Government and elites are becoming increasingly unable to manage complexities. Violence and crime surpass state control. **Governability is at risk. One scenario could be a trend toward “political reclusion” (generalized nationalism) of major nations,** pushed by extreme right groups, fear, and resentment. Democratic regression and authoritarianism on the one side, closed economies on the other could lead to a bad scenario that should be averted.
- ✓ **global warming** and natural disasters / Environmental degradation demands major programs for reducing emissions, cleaning oceans, mitigating negative impacts, building new infrastructure, water, increasing research and

innovation will not take place without a shared strategy, government commitment and reform of institutions.

- ✓ **geopolitical tensions**/ In face of weak global institutions, interstate conflicts are hard to solve. Nuclear threats are always present. Cyberattacks may provoke major crisis. They can paralyze large cities, communications, banking, supplies of electricity, water, food, medicines for an extended period/ Geopolitical tensions between China and US may impact all other countries. The US-China strategic competition and conflict may become permanent and generate a growing disruption that will affect all countries. **Those risks are barely considered when dealing with international finance, economics, trade, and investment.** It prevails in our minds a blind spot, a myth that economics is decoupled from geopolitical trends.

- ✓ A **financial crisis** should not be discarded, the reduction of debt has been slower than planned, deregulations are growing, and more restrictions to public action have been imposed.

Three strategic goals are critical to overcome risks and build better futures.

- **In each nation achieve social inclusion** in order to **ensure governability**. Such national efforts must aim to reduce poverty, eliminate barriers to social mobility, and expand education and health for all. In addition, governments and societies will have to deal with routine jobs destruction and growing inequality. Major national and global initiatives should aim at improving education, long life learning, and digital literacy, employment insurance and training to protect workers during transitions caused by successive waves of change. Governability requires also increasing citizen's participation and a larger role of civil society.

- **A new role of the State and new market regulations should be enhanced.** The loss of power of national states to deal with global forces and actors, must be compensated with internal and international collaboration. Governing a complex and diverse society requires enlarging and improving governmental capacities and citizen's participation.
- **Act multilaterally.** Increased international dialogue is vital for strengthening global institutions. Containing a US-China continuous conflict, implementing a substantial environmental plan and ensuring a free trade system are the three major goals.

These enormous challenges require each country gain governability and stability, and all contribute to a concerted multilateral action. When facing complexity, the answer is resilience, and collaboration increases resilience. Societies that develop a capacity for future studies will be better prepared to act and build an environmental and social sustainable future for all.