



## CTTN Virtual Dialogue

### "Thinking Through Crisis – The Role of Think Tanks"

Wednesday, 24 March 2021 | 16:00-18:00 Beijing/Manila (UTC+8)

The Central Asian Regional Economic Cooperation (CAREC) Institute - a knowledge arm of the CAREC Program – promotes and supports the CAREC Think Tank Network (CTTN) to encourage regional perspectives and raise the critical role of think tanks in bridging the gap between knowledge and policy. The role of think tanks as knowledge producers and knowledge connectors is crucial in providing policy input based on risk analysis and mitigation. Furthermore, the importance of reliable, timely, and helpful information, analysis, and immediate policy solutions to supplement and support government policies and actions cannot be overemphasized, particularly in global emergencies.

Today, think tanks play a critical role for governments and civil societies worldwide by acting as a bridge between knowledge (academia) and policy (policymakers). However, the rapid growth of think tanks in the twentieth and early twenty-first centuries appears to have been challenged by the emergence of a multitude of factors, including the inability to adopt competitive technologies and marketing strategies, dwindling financial sources, increasing competition from media, consulting firms and advocacy groups, among others. To remain relevant in an increasingly noisy and challenging operational environment, think tanks need to produce topical, timely, and user-friendly analysis that is **"in the right form, in the right hands, at the right time."**<sup>1</sup>

The COVID-19 pandemic has triggered many crises, including large-scale social, economic, health and livelihood challenges. An unprecedented economic meltdown, interruption of economic activities in all business sectors, and immense burden on the health sector left governments reeling and scrambling to find appropriate policy responses to minimize the pandemic's impacts. The crisis's gigantic scale entails informed and targeted interventions to shore up severely affected businesses and vulnerable communities and individuals. As knowledge converters think tanks can play a critical role in transforming academic research into policy-oriented, easy-to-use, accessible, and reliable information for better policymaking. Many think tanks worldwide have quickly and effectively responded to the COVID-19 pandemic by innovating their business models and providing timely and dependable policy guidance to the governments. The job is not done yet. The think tanks need to recalibrate

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<sup>1</sup> 2020 Global Think Tank Index Report, University of Pennsylvania, January 2021

their business models, adopt new technologies, and retain the competitive edge to help governments sail through the COVID-19 pandemic and navigate future crises.

The CTTN Virtual Dialogue aims to (i) facilitate an intellectual discourse on the role of think tanks during the crisis; (ii) invite a few think tanks to share their experience of policy support to the government; and (iii) deliberate on the strategies for think tanks to remain relevant in crises.

### **Key Questions for Discussion**

1. What are good examples and lessons learned on the role of think tanks for informed public policy responses during the COVID-19 pandemic?
2. What strategies can the think tanks adopt to upgrade their capacity to develop and share cogent analysis and practical advice to decision-makers in a potential crisis with multi-dimensional challenges?
3. How to strengthen the role of the think tanks in Central Asia, the Caucasus, China, and Mongolia or CAREC to promote and sustain economic and social progress amid and after the pandemic by leveraging multiple sources of channelling ideas, both through advocacy and public policy advice?

## Dialogue Agenda

**16:00 – 16:10**      **Opening Remarks**  
**Syed Shakeel Shah, Director, CAREC Institute**

**16:10 – 17:20**      **Panel Discussion**  
The panellists will present their respective institutions' experience of responding to the COVID-19 pandemic **(10 minutes each)**

1. **Dr. Beijie Tang**, Deputy Secretary-General, Center for China and Globalization (CCG), PRC
2. **Dr. Nella Hendriyetty**, Senior Capacity Building and Training Economist, Asian Development Bank Institute (ADBI), Japan
- Moderator  
**Khalid Umar**  
CAREC Institute
3. **Dr. Abid Qaiyum Suleri**, Executive Director, Sustainable Development Policy Institute (SDPI), Pakistan
4. **Dr. Tuvshintugs Batdelger**, Director, Economic Research Institute (ERI), Mongolia
5. **Narmina Gasimova**, Grants and Programs Director, Centre for Economic and Social Development (CESD), Azerbaijan
6. **Dr. Xiaojun Grace Wang**, Deputy Director, United Nations Office for South-South Cooperation (UNOSSC)
7. **Dr. Hans Holzacker**, Chief Economist, CAREC Institute

**17:20 – 17:50**      **Discussions/Q&A Session**

**17:50 - 18:00**      **Closing Statement**  
**Ziqian Liang**, Deputy Director, CAREC Institute