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A) LEGAL AND REGULATORY UPDATES:

I. RBI Update in the wake of COVID-19

The Reserve Bank of India (RBI) announced a slew of measures in light of the difficulties created on account of COVID-19.

The measures are broadly divided in 3 (three) categories (i) **Liquidity Management**; (ii) **Regulation and Supervision**; and (iii) **Financial Markets**.

A. LIQUIDITY MANAGEMENT

1. Targeted Long Term Repos Operations (TLTROs)

RBI has decided to conduct auctions of targeted term repos of up to 3 years tenor of appropriate sizes for a total amount of up to Rs.1,00,000 crore at a floating rate linked to the policy repo rate. Liquidity availed under the scheme will have to be deployed in investment grade corporate bonds, commercial paper, and non-convertible debentures over and above the outstanding level of their investments in these bonds as on March 27, 2020. Investments made by banks under this

facility will be classified as held to maturity (HTM) even in excess of 25 per cent of total investment permitted to be included in the HTM portfolio. Exposures under this facility will also not be reckoned under the large exposure framework. The first TLTRO auction was held on March 27, 2020.

2. Cash Reserve Ratio (CRR)

RBI has decided to reduce the cash reserve ratio (CRR) of all banks by 100 basis points to 3% (three per cent) of net demand and time liabilities (NDTL) with effect from the reporting fortnight beginning March 28, 2020 as a one-time measure. The reduction in the CRR would release primary liquidity of about Rs.1,37,000 crore uniformly across the banking system in proportion to the liabilities of the constituents. This dispensation will be available for a period of one year ending on March 26, 2021.

Further the requirement of minimum daily CRR balance maintenance has been reduced from 90% to 80% effective from March 28, 2020. This one time dispensation is available till June 26, 2020.

3. Marginal Standing Facility (MSF)

RBI has decided to increase the limit up to which Banks can borrow overnight by dipping into Statutory Liquidity Ratio upto 3% instead of 2% earlier, with immediate effect. This will be applicable up to June 30, 2020.

4. Widening of the Monetary Policy Rate Corridor

RBI has decided to widen the existing policy rate corridor from 50 basis points to 65 basis points. It has further decided that reverse repo rate under the liquidity adjustment facility (LAF) would

be 40 basis points lower than the policy repo rate. The marginal standing facility (MSF) rate would continue to be 25 basis points above the policy repo rate.

B. REGULATION AND SUPERVISION

1. Moratorium on Term Loans

All commercial banks (including regional rural banks, small finance banks and local area banks), co-operative banks, all-India Financial Institutions, and NBFCs (including housing finance companies and micro-finance institutions) (“lending institutions”) are being permitted to allow a moratorium of 3 months on payment of instalments in respect of all term loans falling due between March 1, 2020 and May 31, 2020. Accordingly, the repayment schedule and all subsequent due dates, as also the tenor for such loans, may be shifted across the board by three months. Interest shall continue to accrue on the outstanding portion of the term loans during the moratorium period. The asset classification of term loans shall be determined on the basis of revised due dates and the revised repayment schedule.

2. Moratorium on Working Capital Loans

In respect of working capital facilities sanctioned in the form of cash credit/overdraft (“CC/OD”), lending institutions are permitted to defer the recovery of interest applied in respect of all such facilities during the period from March 1, 2020 up to May 31, 2020 (“deferment”). The accumulated accrued interest shall be recovered immediately after the completion of this period. Since the moratorium/deferment/recalculation of the ‘drawing power’ is being provided specifically to enable the borrowers to tide over economic fallout

from COVID-19, the same will not be treated as concession or change in terms and conditions of loan agreements due to financial difficulty and consequently, such a measure, by itself, shall not result in asset classification downgrade.

3. Easing Working Capital Financing

In respect of working capital facilities sanctioned in the form of CC/OD to borrowers facing stress on account of the economic fallout of the pandemic, lending institutions may recalculate the 'drawing power' by reducing the margins and/or by reassessing the working capital cycle. This relief shall be available in respect of all such changes effected up to May 31, 2020 and shall be contingent on the lending institutions satisfying themselves that the same is necessitated on account of the economic fallout from COVID-19. Further, accounts provided relief under these instructions shall be subject to subsequent supervisory review with regard to their justifiability on account of the economic fallout from COVID-19. For working capital facilities where relief is provided, as mentioned in 2 above, the SMA and the out of order status shall be evaluated considering the application of accumulated interest immediately after the completion of the deferment period as well as the revised terms.

Further for paragraphs (1), (2) and (3) above, the rescheduling of payments, including interest, will not qualify as a default for the purposes of supervisory reporting and reporting to Credit Information Companies (CICs) by the lending institutions.

4. Deferment of Implementation of Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR)

Basel Committee on Banking Supervision (BCBS) had introduced the Net Stable Funding Ratio (NSFR) under which banks were required to maintain NSFR of 100 per cent from April 1, 2020. It has now been decided to defer the implementation of NSFR by six months from April 1, 2020 to October 1, 2020.

5. Deferment of Last Tranche of Capital Conservation Buffer

As per Basel standards, the capital conservation buffer (CCB) was to be implemented in tranches of 0.625 per cent and the transition to full CCB of 2.5 per cent was set to be completed by March 31, 2019. It was subsequently decided to defer the implementation of the last tranche of 0.625 per cent of the CCB from March 31, 2019 to March 31, 2020. Considering the potential stress on account of COVID-19, it has been decided to further defer the implementation of the last tranche of 0.625 per cent of the CCB from March 31, 2020 to September 30, 2020. Consequently, the pre-specified trigger for loss absorption through conversion/write-down of Additional Tier 1 instruments (PNCPS and PDI) shall remain at 5.5 per cent of risk-weighted assets (RWAs) and will rise to 6.125 per cent of RWAs on September 30, 2020.

C. FINANCIAL MARKETS

Permitting Banks to Deal in Offshore Non-Deliverable Rupee Derivative Markets (Offshore NDF Rupee Market)

RBI, in consultation with the Government, has decided to permit banks in India which operate International Financial Services Centre (IFSC) Banking Units (IBUs) to participate in the Non-Deliverable Forward (NDF) market with effect from

June 1, 2020. Banks may participate through their branches in India, their foreign branches or through their IBUs.

II. IBC Update in the wake of COVID-19

- i. Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (IBBI) has issued the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Board of India (Insolvency Resolution Process for Corporate Persons) (Third Amendment) Regulations, 2020 dated March 29, 2020.

As per the Notification¹, Regulation 40C has been inserted which states "*Notwithstanding the time-lines contained in these regulations, but subject to the provisions in the Code, the period of lockdown imposed by the Central Government in the wake of COVID-19 outbreak shall not be counted for the purposes of the time-line for any activity that could not be completed due to such lockdown, in relation to a corporate insolvency resolution process.*"

- ii. Further, vide the notification by the Ministry of Corporate Affairs dated March 24, 2020², the Central Government has under the proviso to Section 4 of the Insolvency and Bankruptcy Code 2016, specified Rs.1 crore as the minimum amount of default instead of Rs.1 lakh.

III. RBI Circular on COVID-19- Operational and Business Continuity Measures

RBI vide its Circular dated 16 March 2020³ stated that steps, including the indicative list presented below, are required to be taken by the respective banks/financial institutions as a part of

their existing operational and business continuity plans:

- (a) Devising strategy and monitoring mechanism concerning the spread of the disease within the organisation, making timely interventions for preventing further spread in case of detection of infected employees including travel plans and quarantine requirements as well as avoiding spread of panic among staff and members of the public;
- (b) Taking stock of critical processes and revisiting Business Continuity Plan (BCP) in the emerging situations/scenarios with the aim of continuity in critical interfaces and preventing any disruption of services, due to absenteeism either driven by the individual cases of infections or preventive measures;
- (c) Taking steps of sharing important instructions/ strategy with the staff members at all levels, for soliciting better response and participation and sensitizing the staff members about preventive measures/steps to be taken in suspected cases, based on the instructions received from health authorities, from time-to-time;
- (d) Encourage their customers to use digital banking facilities as far as possible.

Besides taking steps as above for ensuring business process resilience, supervised entities should also assess the impact on their balance sheet, asset quality, liquidity, etc. arising out of potential scenarios such as further spread of COVID-19 in India and its effect

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<https://www.ibbi.gov.in/uploads/whatsnew/be2e7697e91a349bc55033b58d249cef.pdf>

2

<https://www.ibbi.gov.in/uploads/legalframework/48bf32150f5d6b30477b74f652964edc.pdf>

3

<https://rbidocs.rbi.org.in/rdocs/notification/PDFs/NT1728EEC42EF697147629A2261A4EAF2D3DD.PDF>

on the economy, contagion from wider disruption in the global economy and the global financial system, etc. Based on the above studies, they should take immediate contingency measures to manage the risks under intimation to us.

As the situation requires to be monitored closely, both from business and social perspective, a Quick Response Team may be constituted for the purpose, which shall provide regular updates to the top management on significant developments and act as a single point of contact with regulators/outside institutions/agencies.

IV. **MCA update in the wake of COVID-19⁴**

The MCA has issued a notice stating as follows:

“Considering the need to take precautionary steps to overcome the outbreak of the coronavirus (Covid-19), the Government has in-principle decided to relax the requirement of holding Board meetings with physical presence of directors under section 173 (2) r/w rule 4 of the Companies (Meetings of Board and its Powers) Rules, 2014 for approval of the annual financial statements, Board’s report, etc. Such meetings may till 30th June 2020 be held through video conferencing or other audio visual means by duly ensuring compliance of rule 3 of the said rules.”

V. **MCA Update: Special Measures under Companies Act, 2013 (CA-2013) and Limited Liability Partnership Act, 2008 in view of COVID-19 outbreak⁵**

MCA vide its Circular dated March 24, 2020 has decided to the following measures have been implemented by the

Ministry of Corporate Affairs to reduce their compliance burden and other risks:

- i. No additional fees shall be charged for late filing during a moratorium period from 01st April to 30th September 2020, in respect of any document, return, statement etc., required to be filed in the MCA- 21 Registry, irrespective of its due date, which will not only reduce the compliance burden, including financial burden of companies/ LLPs at large, but also enable long-standing noncompliant companies/LLPs to make a 'fresh start'.
- ii. The mandatory requirement of holding meetings of the Board of the companies within the intervals provided in section 173 of the Companies Act, 2013 (CA13) (120 days) stands extended by a period of 60 days till next two quarters i.e., till 30th September. Accordingly, as a one-time relaxation the gap between two consecutive meetings of the Board may extend to 180 days till the next two quarters, instead of 120 days as required in the CA-13.
- iii. The Companies (Auditor's Report) Order, 2020 shall be made applicable from the financial year 2020-2021 instead of being applicable from the financial year 2019-2020 notified earlier. This will significantly ease the burden on companies & their auditors for the financial year 2019-20. A separate notification has been issued for this purpose.
- iv. As per Para vii (1) of Schedule iv to the CA-13, independent Directors (IDs) are required to hold at least one meeting without the attendance of Non independent directors and

members of management. For the financial year 2019-20, if the IDs of a company have not been able to hold such a meeting, the same shall not be viewed as a violation. The IDs, however, may share their views amongst themselves through telephone or e-mail or any other mode of communication, if they deem it to be necessary.

- v. Requirement under section 73(2)(c) of CA-13 to create the deposit repayment reserve of 20% of deposits maturing during the financial year 2020-21 before 30th April 2020 shall be allowed to be complied with till 30th June 2020.
- vi. Requirement under rule 18 of the Companies (Share Capital & Debentures) Rules, 2014 to invest or deposit at least 15% of amount of debentures maturing in specified methods of investments or deposits before 30th April 2020, may be complied with till 30th June 2020.
- vii. Newly incorporated companies are required to file a declaration for Commencement of Business within '180 days of incorporation under section 10A of the CA-13. An additional period of 180 more days is allowed for this compliance.
- viii. Non-compliance of minimum residency in India for a period of at least 182 days by at least one director of every company, under Section 149 of the CA-13 shall not be treated as a non-compliance for the financial Year 2019-20.

VI. Company Affirmation of Readiness towards COVID-1⁶

Companies Affirmation of Readiness towards COVID-19 Form is a simple web

form with minimum fields and which can be filed from anywhere. There is no requirement of DSC and does not involve payment of any fee. Companies/LLPs are advised to use the service w.e.f 23rd March 2020 in a staggered manner to avoid the load on the system.

Stakeholders may please note that there is no fee applicable for FORM CAR (Companies Affirmation of Readiness Towards COVID-19). SHs may also please note that the form has been deployed as a purely confidence building measure to assess the readiness of the companies to deal with COVID-19 Threat in India. As such no penalty or enforcement related action is applicable. Stakeholders may at their convenience file this form. It is purely voluntary as part of our contribution towards joining the movement to fight against the spread of the disease. Since the portal may experience heavy load, it would indicate 'Busy' alert whenever peak traffic is reached.

VII. Clarification on spending of CSR Funds for COVID-19⁷

- i. MCA vide its Circular dated March 23, 2020 has clarified that spending of CSR funds for COVID-19 is eligible CSR Activity. Funds may be spent for various activities related to COVID-19 under item nos. (i) and (xii) of schedule VII relating to promotion of health care, including preventing health care and sanitation and disaster Management.

Further, as per General Circular No.21/2014 dated 18.06.2014, items in schedule VII are broad based and may be interpreted liberally for this purpose.

- ii. MCA vide its Office Memorandum dated March 28, 2020⁸ has clarified that any contribution to PM CARES Fund as eligible CSR activity under item no. (viii) of the Schedule VII of Companies Act, 2013.

Further it is clarified that any contribution made to the PM CARES Fund shall qualify as CSR expenditure under the Companies Act 2013.

The Government of India has set up the Prime Minister's Citizen Assistance and Relief in Emergency Situations Fund' (PM CARES Fund) with the primary objective of dealing with any kind of emergency or distress situation such as that posed by COVID 19 pandemic

VIII. SEBI circular for "relaxation from compliance with certain provisions of the circulars issued under SEBI (Credit Rating Agencies) Regulations, 1999 due to COVID-19 pandemic and moratorium permitted by RBI."⁹

In view of the developments arising due to COVID-19 pandemic and in pursuance of the RBI circular dated March 27, 2020, Securities and Exchange Board of India has released a circular for "relaxation from compliance with certain provisions of the circulars issued under SEBI (Credit Rating Agencies) Regulations, 1999 due to COVID-19 pandemic and moratorium permitted by RBI."

The key points mentioned in the circular are as follows:

- i. Recognition of Default

A differentiation in treatment of default will be made, on a case to case basis,

whether default occurred solely due to lockdown or loan moratorium. In the event the CRA is of the view that the delay in payment of interest/principle has arisen solely due to lockdown conditions creating temporary operational challenges in servicing debt, including due to procedural delays in approval of moratorium on loans by the lending institutions, CRAs may not consider the same as a default event and/or recognize default. This will also be applicable on any rescheduling in payment of debt obligation done by the issuer, prior to the due date, with the approval of the investors/lenders. The above relaxation is extended till the period of moratorium by the RBI.

- ii. Extension of Timelines for Press Release and Disclosure on the Website

SEBI has also granted relaxation in timelines for rating action/issue of press release by CRA considering information collection by CRAs may be impaired due to lockdown. However, CRAs should endeavour to finish the exercise on a best effort basis. Such cases have to be put up for ratification by the Rating Sub-Committee of the Board of the CRA.

An extension of 30 days is being granted for making annual and semi-annual disclosures by CRAs on its website for the period ended March 2020.

⁸

http://www.mca.gov.in/Ministry/pdf/Circular_29032_020.pdf

⁹ <https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/mar-2020/relaxation-from-compliance-with-certain->

[provisions-of-the-circulars-issued-under-sebi-credit-rating-agencies-regulations-1999-due-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-moratorium-permitted-by-rbi-46449.html](https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/mar-2020/relaxation-from-compliance-with-certain-provisions-of-the-circulars-issued-under-sebi-credit-rating-agencies-regulations-1999-due-to-the-covid-19-pandemic-and-moratorium-permitted-by-rbi-46449.html)

IX. SEBI relaxations / reliefs from compliance with certain provisions of the SEBI (Substantial Acquisition of Shares and Takeovers) Regulations, 2011 (“SAST Regulations”)¹⁰

The Securities and Exchange Board of India (“SEBI”) has, vide its circular provided certain relaxations / reliefs from compliance with certain provisions of the SAST Regulations, in view of the developments arising due to the spread of COVID-19 pandemic, which warrant the need for temporary relaxations with respect to compliance of certain deadlines prescribed under the SAST Regulations.

Accordingly, the timelines for certain reporting requirements under the SAST Regulations have been extended for the period ending on March 31, 2020, as under:

Provisions under SAST Regulations	Nature of disclosure	Due date	Extended due date
Regulation 30(1) r/w Regulation 30(3)	Disclosure of aggregate shareholding and voting rights as of March 31 by a person, who along with PACs, hold shares or voting rights	Within 7 working days from end of financial year	June 1, 2020

	entitling exercise of 25% or more of the voting rights in a target company	on March 31	
Regulation 30(2) r/w Regulation 30(3)	Disclosure of aggregate shareholding and voting rights as of March 31 by promoter along with PACs		
Regulation 31(4) r/w Regulation 31(5)	Disclosure by promoter to the effect that the promoter along with PACs has not made any encumbrance, directly or indirectly, other than those already disclosed during the financial year		

X. Stamp duty Update

The Ministry of Finance vide two notifications¹¹ has deferred the implementation of relevant amendments to the ‘Indian Stamp Act, 1899’ and corresponding enforcement of the ‘Indian Stamp (Collection of Stamp-Duty through Stock Exchanges, Clearing Corporations and Depositories) Rules, 2019’ to July 1, 2020 from April 1, 2020

¹⁰ https://www.sebi.gov.in/legal/circulars/mar-2020/relaxation-from-compliance-with-certain-provisions-of-the-sast-regulations-2011-due-to-the-covid-19-pandemic_46442.html

¹¹ <http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2020/218957.pdf>
<http://egazette.nic.in/WriteReadData/2020/218954.pdf>

B) Force Majeure Clause in Employment Contracts- COVID 19 Situation

WAGE BILLS

The legal proposition for consideration as to whether a business entity can reduce its wage bills in a situation of a force majeure. The answer to the point of consideration would depend on the hierarchy of an employee in the business entity. So far as the managerial, supervisory and category employees are concerned, the employment contracts can always be suspended by the entity provided the employment contract of the concerned employee contains such force majeure clause.

So far as the 'workman' category of employees is concerned, the Industrial Disputes Act takes care of such a situation. The ID Act in cases of non-availability of the work, provides for an option to the employer to reduce its wage bill by laying off the workmen. The condition for lay off is however that the during the 45 days of such a lay-off, half the salary and dearness allowance is required to be paid to the laid off workmen. When the lay off period exceeds 45 days, there can be settlement between the employer and the workman. The employer can also retrench such laid off workman after the expiry of 45 days by following the provisions applicable to the retrenchment under the Act. There is no permission required to be taken from the appropriate government for laying off the workman due to non-availability of the work.

Following are the essentials for a lay off:

- i. There must be failure, refusal or inability on the part of the employer to give employment to a workman.
- ii. The failure, refusal or inability should be on account of shortage of coal, power or raw materials or accumulation of stocks or breakdown of machinery, or natural calamity, or any other connected reason.
- iii. The workman's name should be on the muster rolls of the Industrial establishment.
- iv. The workman should not have been retrenched.

Section 2 kkk defining "Lay off" is reproduced as under for reference:

"Lay-off (with its grammatical variation and cognate expressions) means the failure, refusal or inability of an employer on account of shortage of coal, power or raw materials or the accumulation of stocks or the breakdown of machinery [or natural calamity or for any other connected reason] to give employment to a workman whose name is borne on the muster rolls of his industrial establishment and who has not been retrenched."

Section 2 (oo) of the Industrial Disputes Act defining 'retrenchment' is reproduced as under:

"Retrenchment mean the termination by the employer of the service of a workman for any reason whatsoever, otherwise than as a punishment inflicted by way of disciplinary action, but does not include- (a) Voluntary retirement of the workman; or (b) Retirement of the workman on reaching the age of superannuation if the contract of employment between the employer and the workman concerned contains a stipulation in that behalf; or (bb) termination of the service of the workman as a result of the on-renewal of the contract of employment between the employer and the workman concerned on its expiry or of such contract being terminated under a stipulation in that behalf contained therein; or (c) Termination of the service of a workman on the ground of continued ill-health;"

PAID LEAVES OR WORK FROM HOME:

In present scenario considering the Covid-19 situation, the employees have been advised to work from home or in alternative some of the employers are giving paid leaves to their employees. Almost every corporate establishment has now by and large adopted this strategy through online work portals which not only enables the employees to receive salary by working from home in a virtual context and also output of the business is also generated to a large extend.

C) **ESG implications of the COVID-19 pandemic**

The global coronavirus pandemic is an unprecedented global crisis. The human, economic and financial impacts have already been huge, and it is not yet clear how quickly the virus will be brought under control and normal economic activity can resume.

Impact on staff and wider stakeholders

An urgent priority for companies is to address employee concerns over sick leave, quarantine and caring responsibilities, recognising that disruption may last for months to come. The scientific evidence is clear that self-quarantine measures are essential in controlling the spread of the virus, and companies bear a responsibility to enable this where they possibly can.

Best practices will vary by sector, but include:

- Provision of protective gear and high-frequency cleaning for workers who are exposed to contact with people in their jobs
- Introduce or extend sick leave provisions, especially in jurisdictions where this is not the norm or mandated by government policy
- Flexible shift work for those not able to work from home/remotely; flexibility and adjustment in expectations for home-working staff who are impacted by childcare closures
- Emergency funds or salary guarantee for a period of time for staff who are temporarily not required due to business closure or lockdown
- Provision of mental health support

As well as their employees, companies also have responsibilities towards wider set of stakeholders including their vendors and clients, many of whom are also facing enormous strains. Respecting these responsibilities and doing what they can to alleviate the problems will be important in maintaining and building these relationships in the longer term. Measures that companies can take include ensuring that vendors are paid on time, or even ahead of time; and philanthropic activities to support the most impacted communities.

Companies neglecting their responsibilities now may face consumer hostility later.

Company Annual General Meetings (AGMs)

With mass gatherings discouraged or banned in many parts of the world, in-person company AGMs will largely no longer be possible.

In normal circumstances companies are discouraged from holding online-only meetings, as this undermines the opportunity for interactions between shareholders and Boards. With virtual meetings a necessity now, companies are encouraged to ensure where possible that there are still opportunities to allow shareholders to ask questions to the Board. Once this crisis passes, companies should move back to normal in-person AGM arrangements, whilst maintaining the virtual option as part of a 'hybrid AGM'. This leverages technology to allow maximum access, whilst retaining the ability to hold boards to account by providing physical attendance.

Executive pay

Many companies will miss short-term and long-term incentive plan targets given the market and economic conditions. This will have significant implications for pay awards granted to executives.

Shareholders will not generally look favourably on executives receiving generous bonuses following a year where shareholders have lost out, even though the impacts of the virus are

outside of companies' control. Remuneration committees may make adjustments to schemes to permit rewards to executives who demonstrate exceptional skill in navigating their company through the difficult period ahead.

For companies seeing an exceptional increase in demand for their services as a consequence of the virus and of related government measures, we generally expect remuneration committees to treat this as a windfall effect and be prepared to adjust pay downwards if appropriate.

Some executives in heavily-impacted sectors such as aviation have voluntarily taken pay cuts, including a few cutting their base salary to zero.

Capital Allocation

One of the central pillars of corporate governance is capital allocation, and where companies decide to focus their funding.

At a time when balance sheets are under immense pressure and companies face significant unexpected costs, including how they dedicate resources to ensuring the welfare of their staff, management should review the appropriateness of their share buyback programmes both at this time and in the longer term.

Although there is an expectation that certain sectors will receive government assistance, the most likely outcome for distressed companies will be the use of emergency capital raising through deeply discounted rights issues or placings.

Climate change

The collapse in global economic activity will result in a short-term dip in global greenhouse gas emissions growth. However, this is of course a temporary impact. The kind of mass climate demonstrations which were so effective last year will not be possible, and governments' attention will inevitably be distracted.

At a macroeconomic level, the International Energy Agency have also warned that the slowdown is likely to stall many government-funded green projects, as governments urgently divert resources to keeping businesses and individuals afloat. Collapsing energy demand will also have a negative impact on private sector investment; Further ahead, there may be potential for 'green fiscal stimulus' – government spending on new green infrastructure – but it is too early to say how likely this is.

Public health

The unprecedented pressure on healthcare systems reinforces the rationale for our work on antimicrobial resistance (AMR) and access to medicine strategies, including responsible drug pricing.

Antibiotics are not effective against viruses such as COVID-19. However, they may be used in the treatment of some complications from the illness, like pneumonia. If antibiotics continue to lose their effectiveness, vulnerable patients may be at increased risk of worse clinical outcomes and death from this pandemic, and those which may come in the future.

In relation to access to medicine and responsible drug pricing, the current crisis highlights the need to ensure that vaccines preventing infectious diseases as well as effective treatments are affordable for all, regardless of geographic location. Public health systems are under huge strain, and companies need to work constructively with governments to ensure equitable access to treatment is possible.