



**Les Rencontres Économiques – Aix-en-
Seine**

3, 4 et 5 Juillet 2020 – July 3,4 & 5

Agir face aux dérèglements du monde

Dealing with world disorders

Debate 7 : Ecological transition, a driver for innovation Contribution of Ilham Kadri, President and CEO of Solvay Group

Reinventing Progress spurs innovation

This crisis of our lifetime is the opportunity of our lifetime.

This may sound overly optimistic in today's context, but the COVID-19 crisis has shown how swiftly we can mobilize and adapt; we can do things differently and reinvent progress, fast. At the end of January, climate change dominated discussions at Davos. By early March, the whole world was shifting its attention towards a globally unfolding health crisis. And soon after, this unanticipated consequence of climate change had placed citizens, companies, organizations and governments in the middle of several unprecedented environmental, economic and social challenges.

Today we are being challenged to unlearn and relearn - at all levels. While companies like ours - with our scientists, engineers and digital experts - can come up with new technologies, we need societal commitment to change behaviors, if we all are to decarbonize and reduce the use of natural resources, while improving our lives. We need governments to team up to ensure a level playing field, and adopt the right incentives and policies towards sustainability and industrial projects that stimulate innovation. The European Battery Alliance is a prime example of how a diverse collaborative platform can yield sustainable mobility.

Circularity is also a MUST to not only build a new decarbonized and resource-smart economy, but also to create new jobs in Europe and beyond.

We are all part of a value chain. Chemistry, as a science and the mother of industries, is essential in this value chain and in our daily lives. As COVID-19 took on global proportions, many companies were required to close their plants. Solvay was asked to keep production going, worldwide. So yes, chemistry will be essential to reinvent progress for a successful ecological transformation.

At Solvay, our range of solutions help our customers fulfill or perfect their sustainability ambitions and the demands of their consumers. For example, our materials help reduce the weight - and thus the emissions - of cars and planes. They improve the performance and safety of batteries for electric and hybrid vehicles. They enable the production of renewable energy, and contribute to water and air purification so we can drink and breathe. Our solutions play a key role in the production of COVID-19 test kits and even vaccines. Our contribution is central



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to reducing waste by giving products a second life or by using renewables in our production assets - all important steps towards a circular economy.

We need to continue pushing ourselves to innovate by setting ambitious and bold objectives -- even if we don't know quite yet how to accomplish them. At Solvay, we embedded our sustainability strategy called [Solvay One Planet](#) into our Group business strategy, and it also has a weight in the performance evaluations of managers and our earnings. Our approach is holistic and bold. Clustered around three pillars Climate, Resources and Better Life, we've set 10 goals - some of which are truly pioneering within the industry - to achieve in the next 10 years.

For more than 150 years, Solvay has been using coal as a fuel to produce soda ash, a raw material that still today is indispensable for making glass. While some of our plants are already running on biofuels, we have committed to stop using coal everywhere possible. This in turn will help us achieve two additional climate goals: to more quickly reduce our CO2 emissions to be aligned with the Paris agreement, and to relieve our pressure on biodiversity by about a third. We will more responsibly use resources by, among other things, leveraging the circular economy to double our sales by 2030 coming from renewable or recycled resources. We will contribute to a better life for our employees by offering 16 weeks of parental leave to all parents, regardless of gender, to promote inclusion and enable more diversity in the workplace.

Reinventing progress will have a lasting effect when we create sustainable shared value for all. Tackling inequalities is no longer up to governments alone; companies like ours have a role to play in responsible capitalism. This is why during this crisis we created the [Solvay Solidarity Fund](#), to help out colleagues who endure hardship with donations from the Executive Committee, our employees, our board, our shareholders, in the form of days off or money. To date, the Fund has raised 15 million euros in donation promises, demonstrating once more that caring and compassion are part of Solvay's DNA.

This is also where the COVID-19 crisis presents a unique opportunity. Governments, central banks, the European Commission ... are making trillions of euros or dollars available to help lessen the impact of the calamity and reboot the economy. But consider this: this money is NOT a loan from central banks or the EU. This money is in fact a loan from our children. We better spend it wisely so that they and future generations not only inherit a debt, but also a healthy planet, rich with resources.

Our innovations can only be disruptive, and this transformation from the brown economy to the green economy can only be successful, through a collective effort from companies, governments, schools and citizens, but also through education, reskilling and raising awareness of how sustainability truly benefits people, planet and profit, and creates value for all.



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We are the very last generation that has the luxury to make a choice. Let's make the choice of our children and grandchildren.