The COVID-19 pandemic is the defining global health crisis of our times and the greatest humanitarian challenge the world has faced since World War II. It has entailed business disruptions and affected millions globally.

The global technology and business services industry has demonstrated remarkable agility, commitment and resilience in responding to the crisis, ensuring business continuity for global clients and prioritizing safety of its employees.

It is becoming increasingly clear that our era will witness a dramatic restructuring of traditional economic and business order as we seek the "next normal."

Technology will undoubtedly play a key enabling role in evolving us to this new normal.

The global technology and business services industry is a data driven knowledge industry; a mix of large MNCs, indigenous tech companies, SMEs and Start-ups.

There are estimated to be several million technology & business services companies around the world, employing more than 10 million highly skilled and talented workers

Further, the industry is recognized as a significant positive contributor to the national and global economy

When the pandemic struck
Across the globe, the industry worked on enabling work from home even before lockdowns were announced, shifting tech assets and configuring networks to make this possible.

Realising the importance of the technology industry, many Governments across the world quickly classified tech services as **"Essential services"** to enable the industry to work amidst unusual circumstances.

The industry ensured stable technical connections between teams, customers, IT support, audio and video meeting platforms, safe server connections, invoking cyber-security measures and providing hardware devices to employees at home.

Customer service delivery, particularly of critical or essential services, has used this tech backbone and the IT capabilities and solutions to keep society connected, to provide social services, to enable governments across the world to respond to COVID-19, and to meet customer service requirements even in lockdown.

Anecdotal feedback from operators and clients has been encouraging with most stating that WFH productivity levels remained at least the same as on-premises and in some cases were even better.
In the Southeast European countries 81% of companies found productivity to be even higher than during business as usual. In Malaysia over 70% of employers are of the opinion that employees are more efficient and productive while working from home rather than in the office. Aviva witnessed a 15% increase in productivity of essential services (5% of all services) when India entered lockdown.

To reiterate the trend, Amazon recently announced for South Africa to employ 3,000 tech workers from home for supporting clients in US & UK.

This change looks to be not a short term trend but a permanent shift in working habits.

*Kate Lister, President of Global Workplace Analytics, estimates that "*25-30% of the workforce will be working-from-home multiple days a week by the end of 2021.

TCS has announced that by 2025, only 25% of its workforce will work out of TCS facilities at any time.

There are plenty of examples across the globe on how the industry has developed apps and dash boards to enable Governments to strengthen their fights against the pandemic.
Apps like ViruSafe (Bulgaria), MySejahtera (Malaysia), #Drive-thru C-19 testing (Egypt) and Technology innovations such as printing 3D protective masks, track and tracing; generating heat maps on the number of reported cases, hospitalization, and deaths, have helped the Governments across the world take quicker and more informed decisions.

In Singapore robots are delivering meals and medication to patients. In China, robots are disinfecting hospitals, drones are delivering medical supplies and AI is being used to sort scans to spot the infection. In South Korea, authorities are tracking potential carriers using cell phone and satellite technology.

Each of these examples have dedicated teams of technology professionals working from across the world in the background – coding, developing solutions, building the customer interface and ensuring their scalability.

FUTURES
Today there is enough data and C- level surveys to say that the pandemic will accelerate the pace of digital transformation and adoption of emerging technologies like Cloud, AI, AR/VR, Cyber security, Business automation, Virtualization etc These have and will continue to witness a sharp rise. Companies have already started up-skilling, re-skilling and investing in building the capabilities for the future to ride the new wave of disruption.

Technology, collaboration and access to a global talent pool will be key to driving business and Governments out of the inevitable downturn.

Sharing best practices, thought leadership and collaborating on new operating models on a global stage will accelerate the speed and the depth of the recovery around the world.

Just as the crisis has been global, recovery efforts must be as well. Strategic partnerships formed out of highly blended ecosystems demonstrated the ability to be agile, lean, adaptable and embrace teamwork across buyers and providers.

We saw trust increase between providers and buyers the length and breadth of the globe.

We will continue to see a new version of sourcing, - transparent, value output-based services highly enabled by automation and cloud, which will not only minimise the risks and exposure to such unprecedented disruption as caused by COVID-19 but also significantly boost process efficiency, support innovation and overall business performance.

Ours is a truly global industry; one that adds tremendous value to the world economy

it is time for the true value of this industry to be recognized and for its successes to be applauded.

The Global Technology & Business Services Council has been set up to do just that.