

Dear participants of the conference!

Ladies and Gentlemen!

I am glad to welcome all of you and express my sincere gratitude to Mr. Jürgen Heissel and his team for organizing this important event.

I would like to share the experience of our country that was gained during the pandemic. When everything was just beginning in our country, as in the whole world, there was an acute lack of information, panic and a sense of a serious threat to the citizens lives. Taking into account the dense population and traditions - crowded weddings and ceremonies, we understood that it would be very difficult.

When the strict quarantine announced, people did not have a single reliable information resource. Personally I was well aware of the scale of possible problems, and I was scared.

Channels with conflicting information appeared on social networks and messengers, to which people subscribed to at least somehow understand what was happening. Some believed and some did not take the danger seriously.

The workflow was organized in a manner where there were a media group, a group of press secretaries, and a single official channel that covers all the news, starting from the government's decision and including methods of treatment. The media group collected and raised issues, transmitted questions to the press secretaries group, the answers are published on the single channel Coronavirus-Info, which has attracted more than millions of subscribers in a short time.

It was great, but not enough. People had more questions than answers. We were inundated with fake news, which nullified all information policy. They had to be rechecked, refutations had to be circulated, and facts published. The AntiFake.uz channel was created in Telegram in order to combat false information and this channel continues to work to this day.

There was monitoring of topical issues of the people concernment. Information was collected from social networks, hotlines were organized. And they collected questions, problematic issues, grouped them and sent them to the appropriate structures: the Ministry of Health, the Special Commission, the SES, the Ministry for Support of the Mahalla and Family, and regional government bodies.

At those days I myself fell ill with coronavirus. I panicked because every day there was information about death statistics from all the media. To my

surprise, the doctor did not prescribe any serious medications, recommended monitoring the temperature and drinking plenty of water, but no special treatment. Even at some point I stopped trusting my doctor, having decided that she did not understand anything. And I might die soon. I asked my mother to administer me IV medication, which as turned out later was prohibited to do. I will say one thing, if there were not the pressure and panic in the media, with the symptoms that I had at normal times, I would have thought that I had a mild cold.

In fact, there are many diseases for which the statistics of deaths and the infectivity rate is high. But nevertheless, we don't talk about it so much. It was panic, among other things, that forced people to run to hospitals, occupy beds and distract doctors from their main work. This also significantly “contributed” to the increase in the number of deaths due to shortages of emergency medical care and treatment of other patients.

In addition, panic in the media creates opportunities for the pharmaceutical company to manipulate people. We should not hand the fate of people into the hands of pharmaceutical companies and be held hostage by individual manufacturers of drugs and vaccines!

I urge all media to gradually switch to normal mode and talk less about the statistics of deaths and talk less about frightening cases. If we do not learn and accept this virus like other diseases, we can harm the country's economy and “contribute” to an increase in the number of deaths. Since, in my opinion, we still have to wait at least two years for the vaccine, if not more.

We talked more about treatment protocols and taught people how to properly have home-based treatment. This significantly reduced the burden on doctors and helped to minimize the number of deaths.

The pandemic has exposed both good and bad. And at the same time, I believe, it has advanced a lot in our country, for example, digitalization, which we have lightly postponed until later. Digital services, both private and public, have reached a new level.

The civic activity of the society has grown greatly; an example of this is the powerful volunteers' movement. We have a very friendly and merciful country - these are age-old traditions. We shared the latter, helped complete strangers, neighbors, doctors and everyone who had to work. I think this year has shown that society can be a tremendous creative force and is able to withstand any challenges.

Dear participants of the conference!

Let me summarize. The implementation of all the above measures and projects had a positive impact on the further practical provision of openness in Uzbekistan. Government agencies were able to understand the importance of working with the media. In addition, there was a sharp increase in the potential of press secretaries, who, in times of crisis, have learned to work quickly and in close contact with the media.

In general, the pandemic has become a serious exam for all of us. Especially for our republic which in fact had no experience of information work in crisis. Each of us has grown a lot in his place. We do not want to lose this experience, we are determined to use it for further growth!

Dear colleagues!

Let me end my speech here! Once again, I would like to thank the organizers and all the participants!

Thank you for your attention!