



Joint Statement on the Role of Parliaments in a Time of Pandemic

COPENHAGEN / STRASBOURG / BRUSSELS, 16 April 2020 – The Presidents of the Parliamentary Assembly of the Council of Europe (PACE), the North Atlantic Treaty Organization Parliamentary Assembly (NATO PA), and the Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE PA) issued the following joint statement:

“Together, our organizations span 57 countries across North America, Europe, and Central Asia, and a population of over one billion citizens. We are gravely concerned by the global spread of the COVID-19 pandemic, its threat to human health, safety, and well-being, and its devastating effects on the normal functioning of societies, democracies and fundamental rights and freedoms, as well as the world economy. This global crisis requires a global response.

Our thoughts are first and foremost with the families of all those who have lost loved ones, those who are fighting the disease, and the many more persons whose livelihoods have been greatly affected by the pandemic. We extend our heartfelt appreciation to all medical professionals, healthcare workers, scientists and researchers, and security and military personnel, who are working tirelessly on the frontline of the COVID-19 response to keep us safe. We are also grateful to the essential workers ensuring the good functioning of our societies and economies in a challenging environment.

International co-operation is key to addressing this grave multifaceted crisis. We welcome the many forms of assistance and solidarity between our nations which have helped save lives. More efforts are however needed because no state alone can cope with the magnitude of the crisis and its consequences. Everyone is affected, but there are some persons more vulnerable than others, including those affected by conflict or living in refugee camps, who have to be given safe access to medical care.

The rapid and safe development of treatments and a vaccine are essential to bring this pandemic to an end. Here again, our governments and parliaments must do all they can to encourage cooperation between all stakeholders, first among which are the scientific community and pharmaceutical industries.

By working together, including through relevant multilateral organizations, our governments, parliaments, and central banks can help reduce the economic and social fallout of COVID-19 and the long-term impact of the crisis, particularly on vulnerable and marginalized groups.

Close co-ordination with parliaments at national and international level is necessary to promote democratic, effective and coherent public policy responses and to address citizens’ concerns. Parliaments play an essential role as guardians of democratic values, processes and fundamental freedoms, as well as help enhance public confidence. It is therefore important that they have continued to function throughout this crisis, passing unprecedented economic aid packages and emergency public health measures, while attempting to ensure democratic controls and securing effective checks and balances where possible.

As short term measures produce far-reaching consequences for the lives and wellbeing of the people, it is crucial that parliaments continue to provide oversight and contribute to the conceptualization and design of support measures, not least in the social and economic spheres, targeting the most vulnerable segments of our societies.

In the coming months, our parliaments will have a key role to play to ensure that emergency measures are implemented properly and in accordance with democratic standards, that restrictions on freedoms are proportionate and temporary, that economic relief funds are disbursed where they are needed, and that security and stability are upheld.



Our organizations stand ready to support national parliaments in these efforts. Through parliamentary diplomacy, we can encourage further assistance and coordination between our countries. By providing platforms for legislators to share experience and best practices, we can help parliaments learn the lessons from this crisis and enhance preparedness, resilience and response for the future. By ensuring access by parliamentarians and the wider public to accurate and trustworthy information, we can help combat misinformation.

Meanwhile, we will also continue to perform our core tasks of defending the fundamental rights of our citizens, helping protect our populations against the wide range of enduring threats to their security, and supporting economic recovery and cooperation.”

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