



Asamblea Parlamentaria Euro-Latinoamericana
Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly
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**Declaration by the Co-Presidents
of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat)
of 6 May 2021 on increased EU-LAC cooperation with a view to the equitable and
fair distribution of COVID-19 vaccines**

The Co-Presidents of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat), Óscar Darío Pérez, Member of the Colombian House of Representatives and Andean Parliament, and Javi López, Member of the European Parliament, pursuant to Article 18 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure and on the occasion of the ordinary meetings of the Assembly's bodies held from 3 to 6 May 2021 in Brussels, Belgium, hereby:

1. Reiterate their deep concern about the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has affected millions of people over the past 14 months, claiming hundreds of thousands of lives on both our continents and sparking an economic crisis that has crippled employment and productivity and exacerbated social problems such as poverty, malnutrition and hunger, gender violence, paternal-filial violence and child abuse. Stress the importance of public and universal health systems as a means of ensuring a comprehensive response to this pandemic.

2. Congratulate countries making progress with their mass vaccination drives and note that the increasing availability of vaccines and the intensification of campaigns constitute a decisive step towards overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic, adding that providing universal and equitable access to high-quality, safe and effective vaccines thus constitutes an urgent priority. Call, therefore, on all states and governments to secure universal, free access to vaccines without undue delay, and to pursue transparent vaccination strategies that are underpinned by scientific and ethical criteria, giving priority to protecting the most vulnerable groups. Underline that the pandemic knows no geographical borders, merely social borders grounded in poverty and marginalisation; only by working together, at the global level, to promote multilateral solutions in a spirit of solidarity, equality and fairness will we be able to vanquish it.

3. Point out that it is essential to prepare not only for the potential post-pandemic situation, but also for a possible future in which the COVID-19 pandemic has not been fully eliminated and several variants continue to circulate. Thus call for closer multilateral coordination and the cooperation of the international community as a whole. If we are to solve the crisis, a joint and united effort is needed, ensuring the universal, free and fair distribution of vaccines around the globe, as no region or country will be spared by the pandemic until all countries are safe and have consigned it to the history books.

4. Reiterate that if we wish to truly solve the pandemic, inoculating/immunising the population of a few countries will not suffice; as long as the virus persists and continues to circulate elsewhere new variants will appear, together with the risk that they become vaccine-resistant.

5. Fully support, therefore, the COVAX initiative, coordinated by the Global Alliance for Vaccines and Immunisation (GAVI), the Coalition for Promoting Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Note that COVAX's first round of vaccine allocations includes 31 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, which should receive more than 27 million doses in the coming months.

6. Thank the EU and its Member States for their efforts to secure fair and equitable access to safe and effective vaccines in low- and middle-income countries through the COVAX mechanism. Note that, as the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and the EU Member States have pledged more than EUR 2.2 billion to the COVAX Facility, the EU is one of its main contributors.

7. Welcome the commitment made by G7 leaders to accelerating the development and deployment of vaccines around the world and to working with industry to scale up manufacturing, production and distribution capacity, including through voluntary licensing. Commend the decision announced by some countries to offer any surplus vaccine supplies to the countries that need them the most. Underline that in the current context of vaccine shortages, where only a fraction of the total global production capacity is being used, more action is needed to ramp it up, while catering for the needs of each country.

8. Note the transparency and authorisation mechanism for exports of COVID-19 vaccines established by the European Commission on 31 January 2021 and extended until the end of June 2021. Point out that supplies of vaccines for humanitarian aid purposes and for the 92 low- and middle-income countries that are part of the COVAX scheme, including 10 countries in Latin America and the Caribbean, have been excluded from this mechanism. Note, further, that almost all vaccine export requests submitted so far have been accepted, including exports of some 6 million vaccine doses to 11 Latin American and Caribbean countries.

9. Stress that this mechanism and any other similar instruments must comply with international agreements to promote and secure universal access to safe, high-quality, effective and affordable vaccines, following recognition of the role of mass immunisation as a global public good with the capacity to put an end to the pandemic. Call on the EU to ensure that the mandate of the authorisation mechanism for vaccine exports is not renewed, that no more restrictive measures are applied and that solutions to the conditions that led to the mechanism's activation are found.

10. Deplore the use of the sale and distribution of vaccines as an instrument to promote political, economic, diplomatic or other interests unrelated to the sole objective of tackling the pandemic. Warn, further, against the dangers of making the purchase of vaccines contingent on acceptance of loans from countries selling the vaccine, which

would increase the debt burden of low- and middle-income countries. Call, in this regard, for agreements between governments and vaccine producers to be transparent and public.

11. Urge state and international bodies (international financial institutions, intergovernmental and multilateral international organisations) to consider introducing public debt-flexibility mechanisms for low- and middle-income countries that have contracted debt with international financial institutions to fund public spending necessitated by the pandemic and the ensuing economic crisis. Such mechanisms will afford countries greater fiscal leeway, which will also facilitate the mass procurement and distribution of vaccines in a transparent manner.

12. Consider it essential to step up regional coordination in Latin America and the Caribbean with a view to tackling the COVID-19 crisis, securing sufficient vaccine supplies, promoting equitable access to them and moving forward as quickly as possible with vaccination campaigns, which are now under way.

13. Propose, to that end, strengthening regional and/or subregional coordination mechanisms with a view to streamlining the procurement and effective distribution of vaccines, stepping up research to support their development and production and promoting the exchange of experiences, thus sharing resources and good practices in addressing the economic and social ramifications of the pandemic. Such action must involve all countries, and the participation of national governments and parliaments is essential to that end.

14. Take the view that it is essential for Latin American countries, like some states in the region that have already begun this process, to acquire the capacity to produce their own vaccines, thereby overcoming scientific and technological dependence, especially in such a fundamental area as health care, with a view not only to confronting COVID-19 but also future pandemics.

15. Endorse calls for vaccine manufacturers to boost efforts to increase and expand vaccine production in developing and emerging countries. Point out that for 2021, COVAX has secured vaccines for only 20% of the world's population and therefore vaccine production and distribution in both Europe and Latin America must therefore be ramped up.

16. Welcome the stance taken by US President Joe Biden and urge the governments of both regions to push for the exceptional and temporary lifting of patents on vaccines and medicines to treat COVID-19. Call on governments to consider COVID-19 vaccines a global public good and to redouble their efforts to promote access to and the equitable distribution of vaccines, treatment and medical equipment for the entire population, including support from other civil society actors and economic organisations whenever the competent authorities see fit, in full compliance with the health criteria and requirements set by national authorities for the population as a whole.

17. Reiterate that the EU and Latin America and the Caribbean must make a decisive contribution to international efforts to overcome the multifaceted challenges posed by the pandemic. Call, in this regard, for dialogue to be stepped up between the two regions and

their partners at the multilateral level on how to respond to the technical, financial and logistical challenges related to the procurement and distribution of COVID-19 vaccines and on how to improve existing initiatives and instruments with a view to the development of more effective and comprehensive vaccination strategies.

18. Point out, to this end, that this is a historic moment that calls for more effective, dynamic and comprehensive bi-regional cooperation to provide an efficient vaccination process that not only protects the lives and health of millions of people but also creates new jobs and breathes new life into productivity and international trade, all of which will be crucial if we are to recover from this economic crisis.

19. Warn of the negative effects of disinformation on COVID-19, and urge governments and the media to ensure the timely availability of accurate and objective information so that the populace can inform itself from official sources from authorised global and national bodies.

20. Reiterate, therefore, the content of their previous statements on this fundamental issue: *Declaration by the Co-Presidents of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) of 5 November 2020 on a comprehensive and bi-regional EU-LAC strategy to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic; Communiqué by the Co-Presidency of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) of 14 December 2020 on its participation in the informal meeting of the foreign ministers of EU-27 and Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC); Declaration of 30 March 2020 by the Co-Presidents of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) on the COVID-19 pandemic; and Declaration of 19 March 2020 by the Co-Presidents of EuroLat on the COVID-19 pandemic;*