



**Declaration of 30 March 2020 by the Co-Presidents of the Euro-Latin American
Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat) on the COVID-19 pandemic**

The Co-Presidents of the Euro-Latin American Parliamentary Assembly (EuroLat), the President of the Latin American Parliament, Jorge Pizarro, and Javi López MEP, hereby declare, pursuant to Rule 18 of the Assembly's Rules of Procedure, the following on the COVID-19 pandemic:

1. The COVID-19 pandemic is probably the greatest challenge the international community has faced since the Second World War, with unpredictable consequences for human health and the economic and social systems in all the countries of Europe and Latin America and the Caribbean. We therefore urge national authorities to rigorously apply and comply with international standards, and express our support to the World Organisation (WHO), in its efforts to combat the pandemic.
2. This global health crisis is also a human tragedy for our people, since it is causing the loss of thousands of human lives, poses enormous risks to the world economy and jeopardises the livelihood of a large number of our citizens, both entrepreneurs and, particularly severely, employees, the self-employed, informal workers and the unemployed. We wish to express our solidarity with each and every one of them and the countries affected by this crisis as well as our gratitude and appreciation to all professionals who are risking their health each day to save human lives and to ensure that essential services continue to function as normal in our towns and cities.
3. We are convinced that the current challenges posed by this pandemic call for a highly coordinated international approach, to which Europeans and Latin Americans must make a decisive contribution, an approach that must be grounded in science and experience, consistent with our democratic values and leave no room for ideological manoeuvres and political and partisan confrontation.
4. We therefore wish to convene an urgent EU-LAC Ministerial Meeting by video conference or, preferably, a Meeting of EU-LAC Heads of State and Government, without exception and also by video conference, to establish enhanced cooperation to tackle the COVID-19 pandemic in the countries of the European Union and Latin America and the Caribbean that form part of the EU-LAC Bi-regional Strategic Partnership. In these times of unprecedented crisis we need global solidarity, not unilateral action, and a strong global response to this health emergency by ensuring closer cooperation and more effective coordination of multilateral efforts.

5. We recommend that all countries redouble their efforts to strengthen national health systems in order to protect the health and safety of all, thus ensuring universal access to the analysis, tests and treatment needed to tackle both this disease and future pandemics. These countries must also coordinate their efforts to implement the necessary public-health measures to avoid the spread of COVID-19 and immediately mobilise public funds to contain and treat the disease. This requires allocating adequate resources to the health-care sector and civil protection services in our regions.
6. We wish to stress that, while our current challenges may require the adoption of strict emergency measures, including confinement and states of emergency, these extraordinary measures should be in line with international law, temporary and not used to curtail democratic and fundamental rights in a permanent or arbitrary manner, and should cease immediately once the pandemic has passed.

We call for a human rights-based approach to be used to combat COVID-19 and point out that emergency measures should neither serve as a smokescreen for repressive action under the pretext of protecting health, nor be used to silence the work of human rights defenders.

We stress that it is of the utmost importance to ensure the protection of particularly vulnerable people, including the most neglected strata of society, both medically and economically, in particular refugees, low-income persons, isolated rural populations, those with underlying health conditions, persons with disabilities and elderly persons living alone or in institutions.

7. We call on the public authorities in both regions to do everything necessary to mitigate the economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis, by bringing all available legal, institutional, political, economic and social instruments to bear to stop our economies falling into recession and to support an economic recovery once the pandemic is under control. To that end, we invite governments, central banks and regional development banks to make use of all instruments at their disposal, including fiscal and monetary measures.
8. We also urge the public authorities in both regions to take urgent measures to provide as much support as necessary to employees, the self-employed, informal workers, the unemployed and companies (especially small and medium-sized enterprises) and the sectors hardest hit by this pandemic.
9. We welcome the decision by the authorities of the European Union, its Member States and several Latin American and Caribbean countries to apply temporary measures, such as liquidity support for companies facing a severe disruption of their business or a lack of liquidity or access to credit, particularly firms in sectors or regions especially badly hit, including transport and tourism. These may include fiscal initiatives, public guarantees to facilitate companies' access to credit, export guarantees and the suspension of penalties for delays in the performance of public-procurement contracts.
10. We also welcome the decision by various authorities to grant aid to workers and families affected by the crisis, such as support for employees whose working hours are

cut, the extension of sickness and unemployment benefits, and the deferment of payment of taxes and social contributions, so as to avoid, inasmuch as possible, dismissals and losses of workers' wages.

11. We reiterate our commitment to the stability of the world economy, as well as global trade and investment. We ask public authorities to take all necessary measures to restore confidence, relaunch growth and protect jobs. Similarly, we call on the international community to temporarily suspend restrictive or punitive measures, such as economic, trade or diplomatic embargoes, in order to focus all efforts on fighting the pandemic. We also call on the international community and multilateral financial organisations to suspend, or even partially cancel, repayment of external debt so that debt enforcement can be brought into line with our top priority, namely combating COVID-19.
12. We stress the importance of cooperation in the fields of science, research and technology. We urge the authorities of our regions to engage in joint, publically and privately financed research projects for the development, manufacture and distribution of treatments or vaccines against COVID-19, provided that they fulfil the criteria of effectiveness, safety and universal accessibility.
13. We call on the EU Member States and the countries of Latin America and the Caribbean to do all in their power to increase the availability of medical equipment where it is most needed. We also stress the need to coordinate with information platforms, including online platforms and social networks, to ensure the public has the widest possible access to up-to-date, relevant and truthful information on this disease, thus combating misinformation and the circulation of fake news that hinder efforts to combat the pandemic.
14. We urge the authorities in our regions, in accordance with the World Health Organisation's recommendations, to conduct as many tests as possible to screen for COVID-19 in order to have a clear idea of the true scope of this disease, and thereby combat this pandemic more effectively.
15. We announce our intention to examine this issue in depth at the meetings of our committees and other permanent bodies of the Assembly at their meetings scheduled for September in Santa Fe, Argentina, with a view to formulating recommendations and proposals to the executive and legislative bodies of the various states and institutions that form part of the EU-LAC Bi-regional Strategic Partnership.