

Parliamentary Responses to COVID-19

Week of 11 – 17 April 2020

Countries (A to Z)	Parliamentary Responses to COVID-19	Relevant links
Argentina	<p>The Speaker of the Senate asked the Supreme Court to verify the constitutionality of remote sessions to allow the Senate to work virtually.</p> <p>The establishment of a new wealth tax is currently under review in Congress. The revenue of which would be redirected to contribute to fight the spread of COVID-19.</p>	<p>https://www.ellitoral.com/index.php/id_um/234576-cristina-kirchner-pedira-un-aval-a-la-corte-para-que-el-congreso-puede-sesionar-por-videoconferencia-coronavirus-en-argentina-politica.html</p> <p>https://www.clarin.com/politica/coronavirus-argentina-ahora-juntos-cambio-oponen-impuesto-riqueza_0_7Q0bTXoSR.html</p>
Armenia	<p>Parliament extended the state of emergency by a month on April 13. Among many measures, this allows government to requisition hotels or private property to accommodate quarantined people.</p> <p>Parliament debated whether small businesses should re-open, but concluded it is too soon.</p>	<p>https://mirrorspectator.com/2020/04/14/armenia-extends-shutdown/</p>
Botswana	<p>Cabinet members will give 10% of their salaries, for an equivalent of \$14,000 every month as a subsidy to fight the pandemic.</p>	<p>https://www.africanews.com/2020/04/15/botswana-president-in-self-isolation-after-namibia-trip/</p>
Canada	<p>MPs in Canada approved a wage bill subsidy worth \$ 52 billion on Saturday.</p>	<p>https://www.reuters.com/article/us-health-coronavirus-canada/canadian-legislators-approve-wage-subsidy-as-coronavirus-spreads-idUSKCN21TORA</p>
Chile	<p>The Plebiscite to determine the redaction of a new Constitution, scheduled for April 26, has been postponed to October 25.</p> <p>The legislative project aimed at allowing people to withdraw from their pensions has been abandoned after being declared unconstitutional.</p> <p>Congress approved a reduction of the Defense budget and other measures to save money for the fight against Covid-19</p>	<p>https://www.notimerica.com/politica/noticia-coronavirus-congreso-chile-aprueba-cambio-fecha-plebiscito-25-octubre-coronavirus-20200325021747.html</p> <p>https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R1phVWyL0_Q</p> <p>https://www.infodefensa.com/latam/2020/04/13/noticia-chile-reducira-presupuesto-defensa-crisis-coronavirus.html</p>

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Week of 11 – 17 April 2020

<p>Colombia</p>	<p>On April 16, some parliamentarians presented a law aiming to reduce the number of seats in Congress to save \$316.4 billion to be directed to the reactivation of the economy after the pandemic.</p> <p>Sessions will resume virtually this week.</p>	<p>https://www.elespectador.com/noticias/politica/proponen-recortar-la-mitad-el-congreso-preven-ahorro-de-316400-millones-articulo-914763</p>
<p>Egypt</p>	<p>The Head of the Legislative and Constitutional Affairs Committee will present a draft law for citizens to donate a percentage of their salary based on their monthly income. If passed, the bill will not be temporary, and will continue on after the end of the crisis, to help the Egyptian government confront any future catastrophes.</p>	<p>https://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2020/04/egypt-bill-forced-donations-government-fund-coronavirus.html</p>
<p>European Parliament</p>	<p>The European Parliament is discussing a €3 billion package for national health care support to member states hit hardest by the crisis.</p> <p>Parliament has been meeting to approve special measures to help the poorest and most vulnerable EU citizens with protective equipment and food aid.</p> <p>Parliament will vote on financial assistance on protect hard-hit fishing communities and aquaculture farmers.</p>	<p>https://www.europarl.europa.eu/news/en/headlines/priorities/eu-response-to-coronavirus</p>
<p>Ghana</p>	<p>The government of Ghana will absorb electricity bills for the poorest for the next three months and provide a 50% slash for other consumers.</p>	<p>https://www.africanews.com/2020/04/14/economics-of-covid-19-impact-on-africa/</p>
<p>Greece</p>	<p>Parliament donated 8 million euros to install an additional 50 ICU beds across the country.</p>	<p>https://www.ekathimerini.com/251682/article/ekathimerini/news/parliament-donates-8-million-euros-for-icu-beds</p>
<p>Japan</p>	<p>The Japanese government has announced a nearly \$1 trillion stimulus package including cash payouts of \$2,800 for households hit by the virus.</p> <p>Parliament is discussing a bill to pass later this month for an extra \$156 billion.</p>	<p>https://www.swissinfo.ch/eng/reuters/japan-s-abe-pressed-to-pay-out-more-cash-as-coronavirus-hits-economy/45690352</p>

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Week of 11 – 17 April 2020

<p>Kenya</p>	<p>On April 14, parliament approved a reduction in the value-added tax rate to 14% from 16% in an attempt to dampen economic hardship.</p> <p>The National Assembly has also ratified a VAT cut, and the removal of income tax on workers earning less than \$227 a month. A 5% reduction of income tax was approved for top earners and corporations.</p>	<p>https://www.reuters.com/article/health-coronavirus-kenya-tax/kenya-parliament-approves-value-added-tax-cut-in-virus-relief-idUSL5N2C24RM</p>
<p>Malaysia</p>	<p>MPs are calling for an emergency parliamentary session to approve a RM 250 billion (\$ 57.4 billion) economic stimulus.</p>	<p>https://www.straitstimes.com/asia/south-east-asia/malaysias-pm-muhyiddin-meets-opposition-chief-anwar-to-talk-about-coronavirus-response</p>
<p>Peru</p>	<p>Congress is negotiating with the executive branch on the possibility for citizens to draw from their pension funds.</p>	<p>https://www.infobae.com/america/agencias/2020/04/03/gobierno-y-congreso-de-peru-en-disputa-por-uso-de-pensiones-para-frenar-coronavirus/</p>
<p>South Africa</p>	<p>As of April 14, both houses of parliament are resuming activities amidst a continuing national lockdown.</p> <p>Virtual sittings will be held to debate a revised budget, as well as other measures to face the pandemic.</p>	<p>https://www.enca.com/news/parliament-resume</p>
<p>Switzerland</p>	<p>Parliament announced on April 16, several relaxed measures. Medical clinics and small independent businesses such as hairdressers and florists will open on 27 April. Schools will re-open on 11 May.</p>	<p>https://www.thelocal.ch/20200416/swiss-announce-first-step-in-easing-coronavirus-lockdown-measures</p>
<p>Turkey</p>	<p>Parliament passed a bill to free 45,000 prisoners from jail to prevent overcrowding. Those released will be under judicial control until the end of May.</p> <p>Parliament also passed a bill on April 15 strengthening the law on protection of healthcare workers from verbal and physical violence.</p>	<p>https://www.reuters.com/article/us-turkey-security-prisoners/turkish-parliament-passes-bill-to-release-thousands-from-prison-amid-coronavirus-idUSKCN21V241</p> <p>https://www.trtworld.com/turkey/turkey-s-parliament-passes-bill-protecting-healthcare-workers-35443</p>
<p>Uganda</p>	<p>Speaker of Parliament Rebecca Kadaga allocated SHS 10 billion (\$ 2.66 million) to MPs for ‘supervision and advocacy’ on coronavirus spread. The health budget,</p>	

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Week of 11 – 17 April 2020

	however, has been cut by Shs 5 billion (\$ 1.33 million)	
United Arab Emirates	The Election Committee within the Federal National Council donated 1190 computers used for parliamentary elections for e-learning during the coronavirus outbreak.	https://www.thenational.ae/uae/education/uae-s-election-committee-donates-more-than-1-100-computers-for-e-learning-1.1004335
United Kingdom	The House of Commons published a detailed overview of how hybrid parliament will occur on Wednesday 22 April. Up to 120 MPs will take part virtually, while 50 could remain under strict social distancing rules.	https://www.parliament.uk/business/news/2020/april1/hybrid-house-of-commons/
Ukraine	<p>On April 13, Parliament approved a revised budget to fight coronavirus, of the order of 7.5% of GDP, compared with the 2.1% earlier envisioned.</p> <p>This represents a budget increase of \$7.4 billion, to \$10.98 billion for Ukraine's 2020 state budget. \$2.39 billion is envisaged to combat the pandemic.</p>	https://www.reuters.com/article/ukraine-budget-parliament/ukrainian-parliament-approves-emergency-budget-with-new-deficit-of-7-5-of-gdp-idUSS8N29P04I

Parliamentary Organizations (A to Z)	Parliamentary responses to COVID-19	Relevant Links
Climate Parliament	The Climate Parliament is conducting virtual parliamentary Roundtables to exchange national experiences on Covid-19, and explore the climate and energy aspects of the crisis.	
Parliamentary Assembly of Council of Europe	<p>PACE President has launched #PACEvoices as a social media thread to connect with fellow MPs in times of physical distancing.</p> <p>“We are more than 600 women and men from 47 countries, all elected members of parliament (...) Coronavirus may distance us, but it cannot silence us.”</p>	https://pace.coe.int/en/news/7853/covid-19-assembly-president-launches-pacevoices

Parliamentary Responses to COVID-19

Week of 11 – 17 April 2020

<p>Parliamentary Assembly of the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE PA)</p>	<p>The OSCE parliamentarians endorsed a UN call for a global ceasefire amid the global pandemic.</p>	<p>https://www.oscepa.org/news-a-media/press-releases/2020/osce-parliamentarians-endorse-un-sg-s-global-ceasefire-call-discuss-european-response-to-covid-19-pandemic-and-plan-pa-activities</p>
<p>Joint statement: Presidents of PACE, NATO PA & OSCE PA</p>	<p>The Presidents of PACE, NATO Parliamentary Assembly and the OSCE Parliamentary Assembly issued a joint statement to address the following main points:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Close co-ordination with parliaments at national and international level is necessary for democracy and effective public policy responses. • Parliament must continue to function for democratic control and as guardian of democratic values, processes and freedoms. • All three parliamentary assemblies stand ready to provide platforms for legislators to share experience and best practices for the crisis, to promote resilience and quick response from national parliaments. 	<p>https://pace.coe.int/en/news/7854/covid-19-joint-statement-on-the-role-of-parliaments-in-a-time-of-pandemic</p>
<p>Central Americas Parliament</p>	<p>The Committee on Health, Social Security, Population and Labour held a videoconference on April 14 and conducted an analysis on the resources necessary to cover the emergency such as the acquisition of COVID-19 tests, masks and sanitation products, as part of the actions being carried out in the Regional Contingency Plan supported by the Central American Parliament.</p>	<p>http://www.parlacen.int/Prensa/Prensa/tabid/145/EntryId/3930/Comision-de-Salud-priorizo-acciones-para-cubrir-emergencia-por-COVID-19.aspx</p>
<p>Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU)</p>	<p>IPU provides an overview of parliamentary responses, along with a practice Q&A on remote working tools for parliaments to function during the crisis.</p>	<p>https://www.ipu.org/parliaments-in-time-pandemic</p>