



PARLIAMENTARY ASSEMBLY OF THE BLACK SEA ECONOMIC COOPERATION
PABSEC

INTERNATIONAL SECRETARIAT

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RECOMMENDATION 177/2020*

“The Role of Parliaments in Combating Pandemic – Legal and Political Aspects”

1. The Parliamentary Assembly of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (PABSEC), stresses that the infectious diseases recognized as pandemics, constitute an existential threat to the mankind and its security. The COVID-19 pandemic is a health emergency of unprecedented global proportions, affecting peoples, societies and economies all over the world. In times of a pandemic with such a broad range, the wider global community – parliaments, governments, private sector, non-governmental organizations, and medical society – has a vital role to play in the process of policy formulation. The constant coordination and collaboration between the authorities, at national and international levels are prerequisites to ensure the smooth mitigation of the adverse consequences of the pandemic and to shape a safe and equitable recovery. Overcoming the crisis will require a whole-of-society, whole-of-government and whole-of-the-world approach driven by solidarity and cooperation.

2. The PABSEC recalls its health-related Recommendation 44/2000 on “the Cooperation in the Field of Public Health among the BSEC Member States” and Recommendation 157/2017 on “The Role of the Parliaments in Providing Sustainable Healthcare Systems in the BSEC Member States” and reiterates the commitments stated therein.

3. The PABSEC underlines that as guardians of democracy and the rule of law, the parliaments play an important role in combating the pandemic, by adjusting their procedures and processes accordingly, to ensure that institutions can function in crisis. They successfully adapt to the new realities, work in extraordinary situations, ensure that the pandemic measures are introduced and implemented adequately and in accordance with the democratic standards. The role of parliamentarians is of utmost importance, in providing adequate political backing to confront the

* Assembly debate on 24 November 2020 (See Doc. GA56/LC56/REP/20, Report of the Legal and Political Affairs Committee “*The Role of Parliaments in Combating Pandemic – Legal and Political Aspects*”, discussed on 8 October 2020; Rapporteur: Mr. Pavel Hristov – Bulgaria)

Text adopted at the General Assembly, on 24 November 2020.

negative consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic and to bring the economies and the societies back on track.

4. The PABSEC notes that the parliaments of the BSEC Member States successfully enact emergency laws, in response to the pandemic, ensure effective oversight of the government decisions with respect to public resources management, policy formulation and implementation, proper and timely allocation of funds, approval of supplementary budgets or budget reprioritization. Additionally, emergency measures are implemented, economic relief funds are disbursed adequately, and security and stability are upheld. The PABSEC appreciates the efforts of the national parliaments in their endeavors for economic recovery and stands ready to promote further assistance and coordination of the BSEC Member States, in combating the pandemic.

5. The PABSEC welcomes the unprecedented efforts and measures adopted by the governments of the BSEC Member States, aiming to minimize the negative impact on their citizens and economies. They successfully introduced emergency packages to support people's immediate livelihoods and redirected their policies to the most affected sectors like retail, tourism, airlines and entertainment. Simultaneously, they implemented quick large scale and innovative support programs to reduce the bad effects, by subsidizing SMEs, workers and businesses. Bilateral and multilateral cooperation among the governments, through humanitarian assistance and sharing of best practices, contributes to resolving the COVID-19 challenges in the Black Sea region.

6. The PABSEC underlines the necessity to ensure that the medical expertise and critical supplies are deployed where they are most needed, and that the policy focus is in such key areas as prevention, detection, testing, treatment and tracing. Solid science, reliable data and analysis are critical for policy and decision-making, especially for the difficult choices required during a pandemic.

7. The Assembly emphasizes that the strengthening of the coordination between the local and central authorities has been vital and contributes to a greater regularity and timeliness in the exchange of information and a better observation of the anti-epidemic measures. The local authorities effectively contribute to detect the needs in due time, at local level and to coordinate their actions together with the central authorities, in overcoming the challenges posed by the pandemic.

8. The PABSEC considers that the close collaboration among the parliaments of the BSEC Member States, at regional level, the exchange of successful practices, the effective measures and the innovative approaches, are of utmost importance. The efforts of the countries need to be redoubled on testing methods, clinical treatments, vaccines, and medical research and development. The rapid and safe development of treatments and a vaccine are essential to bring this pandemic to an end. In this regard, the BSEC Member States must coordinate their actions and encourage the cooperation among all the stakeholders, the scientific community and the pharmaceutical industries.

9. The PABSEC welcomes the WHO's contribution and role in implementing the global health response, continuing and expanding the provision of lifesaving humanitarian assistance, establishing instruments for rapid responses to the socio-economic impact and laying out a broad policy agenda for action, on all fronts.

10. The PABSEC appreciates the efforts made by the Organization of the Black Sea Economic Cooperation (BSEC) within the framework of the Working Group on Health Care and

Pharmaceutics and welcomes the adopted Declaration of the Ministers in Charge of Healthcare of the BSEC Member States on Network for the Emergency Preparedness and Response within the BSEC Region (NET-EPR) in the Field of Healthcare (Athens, 29 September 2014), which encourages coordinated action and systematic knowledge sharing on health threats, within the Member States, as well as the Declaration on Cooperation in the Sphere of Quality, Effectiveness, and Safety Assurance of Medicines (Moscow, 28 June 2016). The Assembly deems it necessary to provide a fresh and effective impetus in the field of healthcare, by establishing a system of regular exchange of information among the BSEC Member States.

11. Therefore, the PABSEC recommends that the parliaments and the governments of the BSEC Member States:

- i. *provide* legislative support to ensure availability, accessibility, and quality of health care services as a human right, to all people, without discrimination, including for conditions other than COVID-19 infection and ensure that the right to life is protected throughout;
- ii. *take* legislative measures towards the provision of a timely access to quality, safe and affordable diagnostics, medicines and vaccines, essential health technologies, and equipment, to mount the COVID-19 response;
- iii. *ensure* that the medical expertise and critical medical supplies are deployed where they are needed the most, and that strong steps are taken in such key areas as prevention, detection, testing, treatment and tracing;
- iv. *provide* assistance and ensure the safe and unhindered access of humanitarian and medical personnel responding to the COVID-19 pandemic, their means of transport and equipment;
- v. *ensure* that stimulus packages and other responses to mitigate the negative impacts of the pandemic are people-centered and adequately support the groups who are most affected by the loss of their livelihoods;
- vi. *verify* that the implemented policies address the devastating socio-economic and humanitarian aspects of the crisis, with a focus on saving lives, keeping vital services accessible, households afloat, businesses solvent, supply chains functioning, institutions strong, protection of human rights at the forefront;
- vii. *ensure* that safeguards are in place where new technologies are used for surveillance, in response to COVID-19, including adequate privacy and data protection;
- viii. *deliver* full legislative support to pharmaceutical manufacturers and scientific researchers, for the development and manufacture of high-quality medicines, thereby improving the quality level of healthcare systems;
- ix. *encourage* the relevant national authorities of the BSEC Member States, to coordinate their actions, in order to allow the regular and systematic exchange of information on health threats and pandemics;

- x. *redouble* efforts for exchanging experience, best practices, boosting international cooperation on testing methods, clinical treatment, vaccines and medical research and development;
- xi. *define* procedures and mechanisms of exchange of information, in case of regional and trans-border emergency, due to biological agents, including extremely dangerous diseases within the Member States;
- xii. *call for* an intensified international cooperation, in order to contain, mitigate and defeat the pandemic, including by exchanging information and scientific knowledge and by applying the relevant guidelines recommended by the WHO;
- xiii. *enhance* the practical cooperation, by participation in the organization of seminars initiated by the Member States and by the BSEC Related Bodies, devoted to the issues on the healthcare and the combat of the pandemics;
- xiv. *support* the establishment of a “Network for the Emergency Preparedness and Response within the BSEC Region (NET-EPR) in the field of healthcare” with the aim to ensure the exchange of information on health threats, in real time, among the interested BSEC Member States;
- xv. *reaffirm* the support of the strategic targets in the healthcare sector, identified in the “BSEC Economic Agenda: Towards an Enhanced BSEC Partnership” (2012), in particular, its Goal 7: “Health Care and Pharmaceuticals”;
- xvi. *intensify the* cooperation with the BSEC Working Group on Healthcare and Pharmaceuticals.

12. The PABSEC invites the BSEC Council of Ministers of Foreign Affairs to consider this Recommendation.