

PRESS RELEASE

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Latin American parliamentarians and parliamentary staff participated in an online meeting on the importance of oversight in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

On Friday, August 21, 2020, ParlAmericas and the Chamber of Representatives of Uruguay held an online meeting on the oversight role of parliaments in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic. Parliamentarians and parliamentary staff of the legislatures of 17 countries in the Americas were in attendance.

The meeting was inaugurated by Representative Martín Lema (Uruguay), President of the Chamber of Representatives, who highlighted the importance of oversight to strengthening public trust: “Even before COVID-19, Uruguay’s parliament had resolved to strengthen the scope of its oversight functions due to a growing public demand for greater transparency and accountability.”

Senator Blanca Ovelar (Paraguay), President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, welcomed the attendees and emphasized oversight as a parliamentary task that cannot be delegated: “As legislators, we need to take action to demand the required accountability from governments and ensure that their policies achieve the expected results, either through our work in committees, by requesting reports, conducting interpellations or public hearings, or establishing special committees, as we did in the Chamber of Senators of Paraguay to undertake a detailed audit of the use of resources.”

Member of the National Assembly Elizabeth Cabezas (Ecuador), President of ParlAmericas, thanked the participants and underscored the importance of oversight in the context of the severe socioeconomic impact of the pandemic on the region: “Parliamentary oversight, which is essential for the transparent use of public resources, has become especially relevant given the profound economic impacts of the pandemic, which demand acting efficiently to meet citizens’ needs.”

The panel was moderated by Representative Silvana Pérez Bonavita (Uruguay) and included presentations by legislators from parliamentary committees responsible for oversight of measures related to the COVID-19 emergency. The panellists included Member of Congress Alberto de Belaunde (Peru), President of the Special Multi-party Committee Responsible for Climate Change Mitigation and Adaptation; Member of the Chamber of Deputies Jimena López (Argentina) of the Committee on Women and Diversity; Senator Esperanza Andrade (Colombia) of the Legal Committee for Women’s Equity; Senator Confúcio Moura (Brazil), Chair of the Joint Committee for Monitoring the Fiscal Situation and the Budget and Financial Execution of Measures Related to the Coronavirus; Senator Antares Vázquez (Mexico), of the Health Committee and the COVID-19 Working Group of the Senate of the Republic and ParlAmericas Board member; Member of the Legislative Assembly Silvia Vanessa Hernández (Costa Rica), Chair of the Committee on Financial Affairs; and Senator Agustín Amado Florentín (Paraguay), Chair of the Bicameral

Congressional Committee for the Oversight of Resources Provided in Emergency Law No. 6524 and ParlAmericas Board Member.

Following the presentations, Representative Pérez Bonavita moderated an interparliamentary dialogue that prompted further exchanges by parliamentarians on the challenges associated with oversight in the midst of a pandemic. The meeting ended with closing remarks by Member of the Chamber of Deputies Javier Macaya (Chile), Vice-President of the ParlAmericas Open Parliament Network, who thanked the participants for their contributions to the discussion.

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