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PARLIAMENT ACTIVITIES DURING A PANDEMIC: EXPERIENCE OF FOREIGN COUNTRIES AND UZBEKISTAN

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Abstract: This article analyzes the activities and working methods of world parliaments during the coronavirus pandemic, as well as materials collected by the Inter-Parliamentary Union. The activities of the chambers of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan during a pandemic with specific examples are disclosed. The article concludes relevant proposals for amending legislation to improve the activities of the chambers and structures of the Oliy Majlis during a pandemic.

Keywords: Covid-19, pandemic, Inter-Parliamentary Union, parliament, Oliy Majlis, plenary meeting, fractions, committees, Kengash chambers, remote work, rule of procedures.

It is no secret that the threat of coronavirus has already reached the world, with the exception of a few countries, and is one of the main problems on the agenda. Whether it is an epidemic or a pandemic, it is only natural that the parliament should continue to function, especially if it is within its jurisdiction. Well, the question naturally arises as to how parliaments work in such a situation.

Parliaments around the world have been forced to change their procedures in response to the new situation caused by the Covid-19 pandemic. They changed the procedures and forms of voting, plenary

sessions, committee meetings, and parliamentary oversight. Almost all parliaments around the world have moved to a limited system.

The Inter-Parliamentary Union (IPU) Innovation Center, an international organization that unites most of the world's parliaments, has been compiling data on how the world's parliaments work during the coronavirus crisis [1]. According to him, there are three different practices of organizing parliamentary sessions around the world.

Under the first practice, parliaments continued to hold sessions in person with some restrictions. That is, the number of general meetings and committee meetings was reduced. The number of parliamentarians and staff in the building has been reduced. Some have been transferred to remote work. Parliamentary venues have been relocated, and large halls have been used to provide more effective social distance.

For example, the Swedish and Estonian parliaments asked their staff to stay at home only if they felt unwell or had symptoms.

In the second practice, parliaments continued to hold virtual sessions using remote working methods. Many parliaments have taken advantage of remote working. However, this raises a number of issues, including the need to establish a legal framework for remote operation, security and authentication.

In many countries, including German, Lithuanian, and Norwegian parliaments, video conferencing has been introduced instead of face-to-face meetings.

The French and Dutch parliaments encouraged only the most important staff to come to work, and transferred the rest to remote work [2].

The British Parliament went into "hybrid" mode on April 22 this year. In other words, the fate of the country is being decided by politicians without leaving home. This means that some members of parliament work through the Zoom platform, while others visit Westminster Palace. In the lower house, 50 deputies (out of 650) are allowed to sit in one place at a time, while the rest of the deputies communicate via video. The Zoom platform allows only 120 participants to communicate, so not everyone has the right to speak. [3].

In the third practice, parliaments did not convene. This was due to the fact that the parliaments declared a parliamentary holiday. The lower house of the Canadian Parliament has considered extending the term of office for five weeks (from early March to April 20) after inter-chamber deliberations. However, on March 23, the chamber reconvened to introduce economic emergency measures and then closed again.

The New Zealand Parliament amended its bylaws to allow a special committee to convene instead of all members of the House. It should be noted that some parliaments are amending laws and procedures

(regulations, rules) to ensure remote operation. In Spain and Brazil, in particular, the chambers have amended their rules to allow for virtual sessions. Other parliaments, including Estonia, Israel, and the United Kingdom, have relaxed existing rules to allow committees to meet virtually.

Below, we would like to highlight the experience of Uzbekistan on this issue. It is known that on March 16, 2020, a quarantine was declared in our country with the detection of the first patient with coronavirus. It should be noted that the work in the chambers of the Oliy Majlis has not stopped, on the contrary, the work continues. From this day on, the parliamentary style of work is gaining new significance due to the situation. If we look at this in concrete examples, we should emphasize the following aspects.

First, on March 17, 2020, deputies of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis went to their constituencies to study the current situation in the field of medicine, to provide assistance to local primary health care facilities, and to provide comprehensive support to doctors [5].

Secondly, on March 20, 2020, at the initiative of the President, the Legislative Chamber held its first unconventional meeting with the participation of deputies and permanent senators, members of the Government headed by the Deputy Prime Minister and officials. It included a video conference on March 19 on mitigating the impact of the coronavirus pandemic on living standards and sectors of the economy. The parties also discussed the content of the tasks set forth in the Decree "On Priority Measures to Mitigate the Negative Impact of the Coronavirus Pandemic and the Global Crisis on Economic Sectors" [6]. The factions of political parties in the Legislative Chamber and the committees of the Oliy Majlis chambers set additional tasks in accordance with the Decree.

Third, an internal electronic system has been set up in parliament to facilitate the electronic exchange of all documents. Today, the main activities of the parliament and deputies continue electronically. Discussions of draft laws, control over the implementation of laws by the executive branch, reception and processing of citizens' appeals are also carried out electronically [7].

Fourth, for the safety and health of members of parliament, the use of videoconferencing has been used in the practice of holding sessions and meetings of parliamentary chambers, depending on the situation. On March 24, 2020, the third plenary session of the Senate of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan [8] and on March 27, 2020, the next working meeting of the Council of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan [9] were held for the first time by videoconference.

In particular, in the case of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis, since the announcement of quarantine measures, all faction meetings and committee meetings have been held by videoconference. In addition,

members of the government and representatives of the subjects of the right of legislative initiative were provided with the opportunity to participate in the plenary sessions of the chamber by videoconference remotely.

To determine the procedure for holding meetings of the Legislative Chamber by means of video conferences and creating a regulatory framework, was adopted the temporary Regulation "On holding meetings of the Legislative Chamber of the Oliy Majlis of the Republic of Uzbekistan by means of video conferences during the fight against the spread of coronavirus (COVID-19) in the Republic of Uzbekistan". [10]

Fifth, based on the constitutional powers of parliament and the current situation, in a short time, the Law of the Republic of Uzbekistan "On Amendments and Addenda to the Criminal Code, Criminal Procedure Code and the Code of Administrative Responsibility of the Republic of Uzbekistan" [11] was adopted to strengthen liability for violation of quarantine rules.

Sixth, party factions in the lower house of parliament are making various proposals to the government depending on the situation. For example, members of the SDP "Adolat" faction in their election program have given great importance to reforming the health care system and raising the status of doctors, as well as to the high status of doctors in our country, to provide decent services to the population. They proposed to the government to create equal conditions for workers in the sector at the national, regional, city and district levels, and to increase the salaries of all employees in the sector [12].

Seventh, the leaders of the chambers of the Oliy Majlis [13] made speeches on their social media pages, in which they appealed to our people to show solidarity in the days of trial and to fully comply with discipline during the quarantine period.

Based on the recommendations of the Inter-Parliamentary Union and the international experience of world parliaments, the following conclusions and proposals can be made:

1. Complete the introduction of the "Electronic Parliament" system as soon as possible in order to improve the organization of the work of all structures of the Oliy Majlis on the basis of information technology;

2. Strengthening the legal framework governing the activities of the chambers of the Oliy Majlis, based on the activities and experience of the pandemic, the legislation that determines the constitutional and legal framework, the procedure for remote operation of the parliament and its structures;

3. Minimize the number of meetings, sessions and meetings in the parliament in the context of a pandemic, and make extensive use of videoconferencing. This will also significantly reduce the financial costs of these activities;

4. It is necessary to introduce such a practice in the chambers of the Oliy Majlis, according to which:

- Videoconferencing should be used only for the consideration of bills related to the elimination of COVID-19 coronavirus, national security and defense, economic well-being and the rights of citizens. Naturally, in a pandemic, it is not possible to review and discuss bills in the same way as before;

- The heads of the chambers of the Oliy Majlis, committees, factions of political parties and 3/1 of the deputies may take the initiative to convene a session of the chamber;

- Deputies of the Legislative Chamber and members of the Senate vote on this or that issue by saying the number of the bill and their name. In this case, the videoconferencing system is recorded on special media.

In general, the effective organization of parliamentary activities in the context of a pandemic is an important guarantee of its legislative, oversight and analytical functions. After all, in the words of the President, the people's representatives should become the main initiators and executors of the drastic and effective reforms being carried out in our country. This task requires the activities of the parliament to be adapted to any conditions.

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“TEMUR TUZUKLARI” - THE BASIS OF JUST STATE

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Abstract:: This article discusses Amir tuzuklari, a product of Amir Temur's views on statehood and diplomacy, military, skills, creative potential, science, art and architecture.