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CONTRIBUTION

from

Counsellor Ahmed MANNA
Secretary General of the Egyptian House of Representatives

on

“The role and organisation of parliaments in a time of pandemic”

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Excellency Mr. Philippe SCHWAB, President of the Association of Secretaries General of Parliaments

Honorable Colleagues,

At the outset of my speech, let me extend my heartfelt thanks and great appreciation for your kind invitation to participate in today's meeting. I would like to express my utmost pleasure for participating for the first time in the events of the Association, for which I wish all success in assuming its tasks to serve the interests of our parliaments and meet the aspirations of our peoples.

Dear Colleagues,

For more than one year, our world has witnessed exceptional circumstances, represented in the spread of the Coronavirus pandemic that inflicted most countries of the world, and posed a heavy health-related, economic, social and political burden on everyone. It created unprecedented challenges in all fields, a matter that pushed our parliaments to courageously confront the challenges of the pandemic. The parliaments of the world rushed to develop plans and strategies to deal with this critical situation, to ensure the continuity of their work without prejudice to their national, constitutional and legislative duties, and continue to uphold the principles of democracy. These plans and strategies varied according to the situation and potentials of each country. Hence, allow me to present in brief the procedures and measures taken by the Egyptian House of Representatives since the outbreak of this pandemic. The Egyptian parliament, since the beginning of the crisis, dealt with the pandemic according to a comprehensive strategy composed of two coinciding parts: the first includes the application of precautionary measures to ensure the safety of parliament members and employees. The second includes procedures concerning

the performance of parliament, and the continuity of parliamentary constitutional and legislative work during the crisis, in conformity with the efforts of the Egyptian State in dealing with the crisis.

The General Secretariat of the House quickly took urgent precautionary measures to ensure the continuity of work within the Secretariat, and guarantee as well the safety of parliament members and employees. These measures included the sterilization of all parliament buildings and offices, including those of its specific committees as well as conducting medical tests on those entering the parliament headquarters and testing their body temperature, along with the provision of medical facemasks and disinfectants to the House members, staff and visitors. Moreover, an internal attendance system is adopted to reduce the workforce and allow rotation among parliament employees, as well as reducing the number of working hours while giving priority to the most vulnerable persons. All these measures were taken without prejudice to the requirements of work. We have also provided vaccines and the authorized treatment protocols.

All these measures and others have successfully contributed to limiting the spread of the virus within the parliament, and primarily ensured the preservation of the health of parliament employees and members, as well as the proper functioning of the parliament's work.

Dear Colleagues,

The other part of the strategy of the Egyptian parliament to address Corona pandemic deals with the procedures and measures taken to ensure the parliament's performance of its constitutional and legislative duties during the crisis, as well as assuming its oversight and legislation responsibilities. Among its priorities in this critical stage, the House of Representatives found it necessary to follow up the pandemic situation

closely with the Egyptian government, and evaluate the decisions approved by the government that included precautionary measures and procedures to contain the virus, the partial closure measures, and the provision of necessary medical services to the infected citizens and their families. Further, the House of Representatives issued the necessary recommendations to duly respond to and control the consequences of the crisis.

In order to ensure the continuation of its legislative role, in line with the ordeal of the pandemic and its negative effects, the House held its sittings amid precautionary and preventive measures that ensured the safety of all. These measures were manifested in keeping social distancing among the members inside the House hall and its corridors, and the use of preventive medical means such as masks and disinfectants. The House issued a package of important legislations to help support the State in confronting the virus, which included providing necessary financial allocations on the State's general budget to confront the repercussions of the pandemic, stimulate the economic activity, contain the negative effects and delay the payment of taxes due on the sectors affected by the pandemic without entailing a delay expense. The House allowed the President of the Republic or whoever he may delegate to take new measures to confront the health-related emergency state including the suspension of classes in schools and universities, full or partial suspension of work in ministries and government departments, as well as delaying payment of charges of electricity, gas and water services, fully or partially.

These legislations greatly contributed to mitigating the economic and social impacts on the Egyptian State and citizens and strengthened the potentiality of the Egyptian economy to confront and overcome the effects of the pandemic.

Honorable Participants,

At the end of our brief presentation of the measures taken by the Egyptian House of Representatives to confront the outbreak of the Corona pandemic, I am looking forward to hearing from you about the experiences of your parliaments and I hope that our meeting will be a good opportunity to share experience on this topic.

In conclusion, I would like to thank you for your kind attention, and I wish you and your peoples good health and wellness, and further progress and prosperity for your countries.