



## Covid-19: International Response Debate on 18 May 2020

On 18 May 2020, the House of Lords is due to debate a motion moved by Baroness Sugg (Conservative) that “the virtual proceedings do consider the international response to Covid-19”.

Since its emergence in Asia late last year, Covid-19 has spread to every continent except Antarctica. As at 14 May 2020, the World Health Organisation (WHO) [reported](#) the following figures for the current pandemic:

- Confirmed cases: **4,218,212**.
- Confirmed deaths: **290,242**.
- Countries, areas or territories with cases: **216**.

The UK had the fourth-highest number of [confirmed cases worldwide](#) (with 226,467), behind the United States (1,340,098); the Russian Federation (242,271) and Spain (228,030).

On 30 January 2020, the WHO’s director-general, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, [declared](#) the pandemic a “public health emergency of international concern”. On 5 February, the WHO [announced](#) that \$675 million was needed for a new Covid-19 [preparedness and response global plan](#), covering the period until April. The plan has since been updated. The [latest version](#) provides guidance on how national and subnational public health systems should respond to Covid-19. The UN has since launched a coordinated appeal for a multibillion-dollar emergency relief package for low and middle-income countries. In addition, a range of international bodies and coalitions are working on responses to the impact of Covid-19 in various areas, from health equipment and [vaccine research](#) to development aid and wider economic support.

Prime Minister Boris Johnson has said “it’s humanity against the virus—we are in this together, and together we will prevail”. The UK Government has [stated](#) that it has a four-point plan in respect of international action on Covid-19: “1) co-ordinating the global health response; 2) accelerating the search for a vaccine, treatments and testing; 3) securing a sound economic response; and 4) bringing our people home”. Following on from [earlier international coordination](#), the UK co-hosted a global response pledging conference on 4 May and will host a [global vaccine summit](#) on 4 June. However, on 6 May, former prime minister Theresa May [wrote](#) in the *Times* (£) that the world had shown an “inability to forge a coherent international response” to Covid-19 to date.

Thomas Brown | 15 May 2020

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## Key information

- World Health Organisation, [Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\): Situation Report—114](#), 13 May 2020; and [Coronavirus Disease \(Covid-19\): Situation Report—113](#), 12 May 2020

Extracts from recent WHO [situation reports](#) providing Covid-19 case and death figures globally and by region. The latest states that the WHO has “joined forces with the United Kingdom to run an [awareness campaign](#) [...] about the risks of inaccurate and false information regarding the Covid-19 pandemic”. The second highlights the call by Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, WHO director-general, for a “slow [and] steady lifting of public health and social measures (so called lockdowns), which is key to stimulating economies, while also keeping a vigilant eye on the virus so that control measures can be quickly implemented if an upswing in cases is identified”.

- World Health Organisation, [Covid-19 Strategy Update](#), 14 April 2020; and [Country Preparedness and Response Status for Covid-19](#), 11 May 2020

Copy of the WHO’s updated Covid-19 strategy, which provides guidance on the “public health response to Covid-19 at national and subnational levels, including practical guidance for strategic action, tailored to the local context”. This is accompanied by an updated status document detailing a preliminary categorisation of countries’ preparedness and response status.

- UN News, ‘[Covid-19: UN and partners launch \\$6.7 billion appeal for vulnerable countries](#)’, 7 May 2020

UN News article highlighting calls in the Covid-19 [Global Humanitarian Response Plan](#) for additional funding pledges to help halt the spread of Covid-19 in 63 low and middle-income countries.

- Claire Felter, ‘[What is the world doing to create a Covid-19 vaccine?](#)’, Council on Foreign Relations, 13 May 2020

Explainer from the US-based Council on Foreign Relations, summarising international efforts to develop and mass-produce an effective vaccine.

- Prime Minister’s Office and Department for International Development, ‘[PM: “It’s humanity against the virus”](#)’, 4 May 2020

Government press release published in advance of a virtual coronavirus global response pledging conference, co-hosted by the UK.

- HM Government, [Our Plan to Rebuild: The UK Government’s Covid-19 Recovery Strategy](#), 11 May 2020, CP 239, pp 44–5

Extract from the Government’s recovery strategy, setting out the UK’s approach to international action and awareness on Covid-19.

## Parliamentary debate, statements and questions

- [Oral Question on 'Covid-19: Overseas Development Assistance'](#), HL Hansard, 22 April 2020, cols 49–52
- [Oral Questions on 'International Development'](#), HC Hansard, 29 April 2020, cols 301–10
- [Statement on 'Covid-19: International Response'](#), HC Hansard, 6 May 2020, cols 565–74
- [Oral Question on 'Covid-19 Vaccine'](#), HC Hansard, 11 May 2020, cols 15–17
- Selection of recent written questions: [40723](#); [HL3458](#); [HL3437](#); [902385](#); [HL3792](#); [HL3864](#); [41974](#); [HL3766](#); [43028](#); [43695](#); [43721](#); [HL3457](#); [HL3475](#); [HL3569](#); [HL3570](#).

## Press articles and comment

- Sarah Newey, '[China participates in global coronavirus summit while US maintains silence](#)', *Telegraph* (£), 4 May 2020
- BBC News, '[Coronavirus: Theresa May criticises world pandemic response](#)', 6 May 2020
- Imogen Braddick, '[Theresa May hits out at world leaders for "incoherent international response" to coronavirus pandemic](#)', *Evening Standard*, 6 May 2020
- Camilla Hodgson, '[WHO's chief scientist offers bleak assessment of challenges ahead](#)', *Financial Times* (£), 13 May 2020

## Read more

- House of Commons Foreign Affairs Committee, [Viral Immunity: The FCO's Role in Building a Coalition Against Covid-19](#), 6 April 2020, HC 239 of session 2019–21; and [Oral Evidence: Coronavirus—FCO Response, HC 239](#), 21 April 2020
- Congressional Research Service, [Covid-19: Global Implications and Responses](#), 8 May 2020
- Chatham House, [The World Today](#), April and May 2020
- United Nations, '[Coronavirus global health emergency](#)', accessed 14 May 2020
- World Health Organisation, '[Coronavirus disease \(Covid-19\) pandemic](#)', accessed 14 May 2020
- United Nations Development Programme, '[Covid-19 pandemic](#)', accessed 14 May 2020
- International Monetary Fund, '[IMF and Covid-19 \(coronavirus\)](#)', accessed 14 May 2020
- World Bank Group, '[World Bank Group and Covid-19 \(coronavirus\)](#)', accessed 14 May 2020
- Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development, '[Tackling coronavirus \(Covid-19\): Contributing to a global effort](#)', accessed 14 May 2020