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## Coronavirus Covid-19. Japanese Premier Abe: “This is not Japan's solitary battle. The whole world is facing a common enemy”

Tokyo – On the afternoon of 13 March, by a large majority, the Upper House of the Japanese Parliament, gathered in plenary session, passed a bill introducing specific provisions for combating the new Coronavirus. The new package of measures will be included in a previous 2013 emergency bill on extraordinary measures to combat the spread of infectious diseases, passed in the wake of the large-scale earthquake, tsunami and the subsequent nuclear accident at the Fukushima power plant of March 2011. The WHO's declaration of a pandemic on March 11, the increase in the number of infected people in the country and the pressing need, in view of the next Olympics, to convey, at international level, the image of Japan as a Country capable of implementing effective and drastic measures against the spread of the virus, have brought together the various political factions that voted the measure presented to Parliament almost unanimously, with 216 votes in favour and only 18 votes against by deputies of the Communist Party. Albeit with differing positions that emerged in the parliamentary debate and in the preparatory process, the members of the various political parties agreed on the new legislation in a very short time, which grants extraordinary powers to the Prime Minister and the Governors of 47 Japanese Prefectures and

### **It will equally affect citizens' freedom and individual rights.**

In particular, the new bill stipulates that the Head of Government has the power to declare a state of emergency if it appears to be "urgent and inevitable", indicating the duration of the emergency and the areas involved, after consultation and expert advice on the risks of a rapid and virulent spread of Covid-19 at national level that would seriously endanger the lives of citizens and their socio-economic conditions. *In the case of a declaration of national emergency, local Governors have the power to autonomously deliberate measures to restrict the free movement of residents in the Prefecture of competence* and prohibit or regulate the use of school facilities and more generally all those that can host a large number of people, such as sports facilities, cinemas and traditional onsen, the spas popular among the Japanese people and widespread in all cities of Japan. However, the new legislation has a deadline set for the end of January 2021. Critical aspects of the new law include the possibility for the Prime Minister to declare a state of emergency without prior consultation with Parliament and the power attributed to local governors to intervene in the personal freedom and individual rights of citizens. After the bill's approval, political party representatives expressed their concerns in various statements to the press, such as the representative of the Democratic Party of Japan, Tamaki, who told journalists: "The state of emergency could severely restrict the personal freedoms of citizens. We will therefore closely monitor the government's action to ensure that the conditions laid down by law are respected. Majority MP Seko, secretary-general of the Liberal Democratic Party, said at a press conference, " This law enshrines some very important measures to respond to a crisis situation. The WHO declared that we are facing a pandemic and although we hope that it will not prove necessary, in the unlikely event that the situation worsens, thanks to these new rules we will be able to carry out a very strong action according to precise rules". He also added that the declaration of emergency should not be determined by political factors, as it also involves restrictions on individual rights, but should be taken on the basis of expert judgement and evaluation. With regard to the new " anti new corona virus" legislation, approved on the afternoon of the 13th, promulgated on the same night and already in force on the 14th, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe expressed the Government's official position in a timely press conference held at 18.00 on March 14. *"This law is designed to be prepared for situations of emergency," the Prime Minister said.* "The number of people affected by the virus in Japan is 0.06 per 10,000, lower than in South Korea, China, Italy and other countries. Thus at present we are not in a situation in which a state of emergency

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should be declared. However - he concluded - things are changing by the hour: *if necessary, to protect the life and health of our people, we will take the necessary actions in compliance with the new law and according to the procedures enshrined therein.*" With regard to future measures to be taken to mitigate the impact of the epidemic on the economy, he pointed out that the Government's top priority is to avert the spread of the disease, but that "drastic and unprecedented" measures are also being studied in the economic sphere in order to restore a solid path of economic growth in the Country. The Prime Minister closed the conference reminding journalists that *"this is not a solitary battle of Japan. The whole world is facing a common enemy that is the new coronavirus.* The G7 and the G20 can contribute to a united response from the international community, including in the economic field. We can overcome all difficulties if we manage to work together.

Massimo Succi