



NATIONAL  
POLICY  
FORUM  
2020  
International

# I want to start by thanking you for taking the time to respond to this consultation.

Coronavirus is the biggest crisis our country has faced in a generation. It is a health crisis, an economic crisis and – for many – a personal crisis.

Our immediate attention must be on responding to the pandemic and ensuring the health and safety of people across the country. In this context, it is appropriate that our policy-making in response to coronavirus is swift and responsive to the circumstances.

But this is also an important moment of change for our country. The decisions made over the next five to ten years will fundamentally alter people's lives for generations to come.

It is therefore right that we pause and consider the context and values of our policies, as we look to build our policy platform over the coming years ahead of the next General Election.

The Labour Party is an incredible and powerful force for good. But we've just lost four elections in a row. It is essential that we use the next few years to reconnect across the country, to re-engage with our communities and voters, to establish a coalition across our towns and our cities, regions and nations, to speak for the whole of the country. Policy development is central to that aim.

I want this consultation to engage all parts of our Party in a broad discussion about our beliefs and principles, and the issues we all connect on. Although we are not starting from scratch, these are important issues that deserve careful and considered deliberation; they will be the starting point for us to rebuild our society.

This year's consultation covers eight areas, all relating to the current coronavirus crisis. It asks questions about how we can rebuild our economy, environment, public services, international relations and political system once the pandemic has passed.

Over the course of the consultation we will be running a programme of activity to connect and engage with as many people as possible. Although we would never have chosen these circumstances, the current context offers us the opportunity to begin exploring new methods of engagement. This must be an inclusive process, where we are actively making sure everyone can participate on an equal footing.



I recognise that our policy-making processes are due for review. New developments and new movements have presented us with an opportunity to consider how we engage with one another, both within and beyond our membership.

I want us to use this consultation process to learn and assess the strengths and weaknesses in our own structures. I want us to build on the work that has already been done and consider how we can gain wider public support for our policies, while also ensuring that our policy making processes provide genuinely meaningful, democratic policy engagement. To win again, we need to connect with the voting public on the issues they care about most, inspire them with our vision of the future, and build the case for why supporting Labour meets their everyday concerns.

I hope that you look at these consultations as an opportunity to re-shape the future of both our country and our Party. Please use them to engage with your fellow members and supporters and submit your ideas to the National Policy Forum, whether individually or as part of a collective group.

Thank you again for taking part, I very much look forward to hearing your insight and ideas on how we can re-shape our policy platform to win again so that we can ensure a fairer Britain for all.

Yours,



**Keir Starmer**  
**Leader of the Labour Party**

**Thank you for taking part in the Labour Party's 2020 National Policy Forum Consultation. Through this consultation, and the wider policy making process, we want to work with our members, supporters and stakeholders to discuss issues which impact on people's everyday lives to help shape our policy platform.**

This booklet is one of eight policy documents published by the Labour Party as part of our consultation this year.

Each document outlines the background of the consultation topic, followed by a set of questions. You do not need to answer every question, nor is there a specific way to answer them. We suggest using the questions to stimulate and develop your thoughts on what you think are the main issues in the consultation's policy area.

Once you have written up your response, you can submit it to us through Labour Policy Forum: [www.policyforum.labour.org.uk](http://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk). For more information on how to make a submission, see <https://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk/consultation-submission-guide>.

On the website you will also find guides on other ways to get involved in the consultation, as well as information on the programme of online events we will be running.

There are seven other documents that might interest you covering different policy areas, which you can also find online. If you have an idea or issue you would like to talk about that is not covered in this year's consultation, you can submit these to us too.

Whether you are a Labour Party member, supporter or stakeholder, we want to hear your views on the issues which impact on people's everyday lives.

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Want to know more about how Labour makes its policy?  
You can learn more about how Labour develops its policy, find further information on the 2020 Consultation and see our programme of online policy events on our website [www.policyforum.labour.org.uk](http://www.policyforum.labour.org.uk).

## ACCESSIBLE MATERIALS

The Labour Party is an inclusive member-based organisation that prides itself on being accessible to all who share its values. If you would like an accessible version of the consultation documents please email us at **[policydevelopment@labour.org.uk](mailto:policydevelopment@labour.org.uk)** to discuss how we can best accommodate your requirements.

## Championing internationalism in the post-coronavirus world

The coronavirus pandemic is a public health, economic, and security crisis on a global scale that few have seen before in their lifetimes. Such a crisis should have demanded an equally unprecedented international response, harnessing the world's collective resources, expertise and political will. Instead, what coronavirus has revealed is an absence of global leadership. International structures are limited, collective response mechanisms are fractured, and the global capacity to meet future threats is in need of reform.

The long-term impact of the virus is still unknown and the necessary actions taken by governments to protect citizens everywhere will produce new challenges as they come out of lockdown. We must question the suitability of existing global public health policies; challenge the failure to protect the most vulnerable states and stateless peoples; and ask questions on how to reboot the global economy whilst protecting workers down supply chains, their health and wellbeing and human rights. The UK, like all countries, will face some fundamental choices on the progression of globalisation and rectifying its past failures.

The pandemic has laid bare the systemic weaknesses in public health and other essential public services for many parts of the global south, who now struggle to balance the necessity of protecting their people against the impacts of the global economic turndown. In densely populated refugee camps, cities where war has destroyed medical infrastructure, and for people whose vital humanitarian aid is blocked, the coronavirus will be at its most potent. It is a failure of collective global leadership to allow coronavirus to be at its most potent against the world's already most-vulnerable people.

As we commemorate the 75th anniversary of VE day - the end of the Second World War in Europe, this crisis has once again shown the crucial role our armed forces play in our national defence, safety and wellbeing. Both domestically and overseas, the British Armed Forces have demonstrated their quality, dedication and skill in fighting this disease. The logistical challenges arising out of coronavirus and the continued threats we have faced from adversaries throughout the crisis remind us that new, and unforeseen, security threats will continue to emerge. We must ensure our Armed Forces are ever vigilant, equipped with the very best kit and trained with the right skills for the next 50 years, rather than the last.

These unique challenges for international policy come as Britain finds itself at a crossroads, pursuing political and trade relationships, new and old, around the world. The government will be making choices for our future, on trade deals and military alliances; on cooperation for research and development and which countries to prioritise for these relationships. In too many instances before the Conservatives policy of 'Global Britain' has failed our citizens abroad, our allies, and the world's most vulnerable. As countries begin to emerge into a very different world after coronavirus, now more than ever Labour has to reassert our values of internationalism.

## The challenges

### Global governance

The historical lack of adequate coordination between nations on key issues, along with the poor communication and mistrust around coronavirus have merged into a crisis of globalisation.

In the short-term, the priority must be preventing deaths and avoiding further waves of Covid-19. This means avoiding bidding wars on potential vaccines, and life-saving equipment, and ensuring that these tools are accessible to all nations and peoples in an equitable way. This crisis demonstrates the need to resist the privatisation of public health services, and to champion health care, including vaccines, as a right not a privilege.

Beyond coronavirus, we need to learn lessons of past failings to address the future challenges that will demand even greater cooperation. This means undertaking a stark appraisal of our international institutions and their ability to protect the most vulnerable.

### Isolationism and nationalism

The recent period of protectionism seen in many countries, now exacerbated by coronavirus could develop into a much deeper isolationism, especially given growing mistrust of global institutions alongside increasing sinophobia, xenophobia and finger pointing between countries. Failing international systems and economic pressures after Covid-19 heighten risks of polarisation of nations, who find themselves caught between a more assertive China and the US. This threat is compounded as the 'West' now finds itself divided by those with nationalist tenancies, bolstered by the Trump administration and his pursuit of unchecked neo-liberalism and self-interest.

### The climate emergency

In 2019, average planetary temperatures were 1.1°C higher than pre-industrial levels, more than two-thirds of the way towards the 'point of no return'. Yet many of the world's leaders are still in persistent denial about the climate emergency, promoting policies that will actively make climate change worse or fail to take the action required on emissions targets. The postponement of COP26 due to coronavirus adds further pressure on all nations to reach international measures that are critical for the planet.

### The global economy

Addressing the crisis in the global economy after Covid-19 must take account of unintended negative impacts for economies in the global south, and workers worldwide. Addressing sovereign debt relief must also be an urgent matter for global governance, with poor countries forced to spend more money on debt payments than on healthcare.

Britain specifically needs to agree new trade deals that will benefit UK workers and businesses of all sizes. However, in achieving this, Britain cannot ignore human rights abuses or damaging environmental practices in partner countries, nor should it attempt to attach trade conditions to vital aid as a bargaining chip in those negotiations.

## **Conflict and human security**

Across the world, conflicts continue unabated in fragile states lacking the public health infrastructure to cope with an emergency on the scale of Covid-19, such as in Syria, Yemen and Libya. Terror groups continue to gain a stronger foothold across the Sahel, and there are unresolved political tensions where human security and civil liberties are regularly by-passed, such as in Kashmir, Hong Kong, Venezuela and Iran.

There has been a regression of international law and respect for human life such as the planned annexation of the occupied West Bank and the plight of the Uighurs and the Rohingya. Governments in Europe are using Covid-19 as a precursor to crackdown on the rights of women, LGBTQ+ people, migrants, and other minorities.

At home in the UK, a pandemic has long been at the top of the national security threat list, and yet the government was insufficiently prepared. As the government works through the fallout of coronavirus it cannot lose sight of other security threats such as terrorism, natural disasters, cyber-attacks, and Russian aggression.

## The way forward

### Reaffirming Labour's internationalism

Labour has always been an internationalist political party whose foreign policy is guided by a set of values and ethical principles. From calling out human rights abuses, even with our friends, to effectively challenging our adversaries. From ending poverty and hunger, to challenging violent suppression in all its forms. We now need to reaffirm what internationalism means to our party, so when in government our values can underpin the global leadership we will deliver.

### Offering real global leadership

The 'Global Britain' policy offered by this government has failed to grasp the urgency and scale of the challenges facing the world, even before coronavirus. Labour want to see the UK take a lead on tackling key issues like the climate emergency, sovereign debt relief, the refugee crisis and ending conflict. Taking encouragement from the major international breakthroughs struck in the past, we must identify the future challenges we will face and work hard to be respected enough on the international stage to negotiate international solutions.

### Using Britain's expertise and resources

Britain has a world leading armed forces of whom Labour could not be more proud, alongside experienced diplomatic corps and development aid experts. We also commend the ingenuity of our science and technology industries during this crisis in producing lifesaving equipment at rapid speed. Moving forward we must find a way to better utilise all the very best our country has to offer, including the expertise of our worker forces, trades unions, and British defence manufacturers for the benefit of partners around the world.

### Reforming international structures

From the World Health Organisation to the United Nations and the World Bank, coronavirus had challenged the very purpose of our global institutions, their effectiveness and ability to lead. Labour has long called for the UK to be an advocate for progressive change in our global institutions, these systems have failed and we must grasp the underlying problems and reform them.

### Rebuilding relationships

To move forward and build national and global resilience for the challenges ahead, the UK must look outwardly to its relationships around the world. For the UK to be ready to lead in future crises, we need to rebuild our global partnerships, underpinned by trust and good will.

We must re-evaluate our historical links across the global south, so that they are founded on the right values such as equal partnership, rather than paternalism. We need to grasp how to ensure global structures share resources not hoard them, and that resources go to the places and people in most need. We must also consider how best to take into account the critical factors that influence economic empowerment such as gender inequality.

## Questions:

1. What are the most important values of internationalism that Labour should champion and how could we embed these in the global leadership needed after coronavirus?
2. What are the lessons to learn from the ingenuity and skill demonstrated throughout coronavirus for a more holistic defence resilience in the future?
3. What should the values and priorities be, which will underpin our international development strategy and define our relationships with partner countries?
4. How should Labour prioritise the international issues on which we will need to offer global leadership for creating more equality and opportunity for all?
5. What do you consider to be the major weaknesses in our national security and collective global stability?