

COVID-19 Urgent Economic Stimulus and Workplace Measures Required

Council of Global Unions (CGU) Joint Statement

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The rapid and wide spread of the SARS-CoV-2 virus and the COVID-19 disease that it causes require an urgent global response to protect health and stimulate the economy. Governments and employers must act to protect workers and tackle transmission in workplaces.

The International Monetary Fund (IMF) has warned that COVID-19 could cause an economic crash similar to the 2008 recession. The need for governments to act together and through multilateral institutions to shore up the economy and keep people in work is clear. The global economy needs economic stimulus that reaches the real economy, workers and small businesses, and prioritises employment, livelihoods and communities. Income support for all workers, including for part-time, migrant, non-resident, precarious, 'gig' and informal workers, is essential.

Workers are on the frontline of the economic, social and health impacts of the COVID-19 coronavirus. Failure to protect them will increase the spread of the disease. Special provision must be made to immediately extend paid sick-leave entitlements to workers who lack them, and to improve sick leave provisions where they exist as well as to ensure working conditions and arrangements that provide protection.

Workers who rely on platform businesses for their employment should have access to social protection and to compensation from funds which are paid for by the platform businesses themselves.

The world is facing an immediate and potentially huge crisis. The spread of the virus into the poorest countries, where infrastructure and sanitation are inadequate, risks catastrophic impacts on hundreds of millions of people. In addition, the huge strains on health systems caused by COVID-19 are likely to provoke new public health challenges.

While workers in every sector are exposed to risk, it is health and care workers who will bear the immediate brunt of the mitigation and treatment needs. In many countries healthcare funding is insufficient or people have no healthcare, and even where health systems are amongst the best, the impacts of COVID-19 could be overwhelming. The global response must put this at the forefront.

As the impact of the virus spreads further, dialogue between unions, employers and government and collective bargaining are vitally important in protecting workers' health and their rights at work.

Governments must rise to the challenge to tackle the crisis today and to prepare and prevent future disease crises. Workers and their workplaces are central to this.

The Council of the Global Unions (CGU), representing 200 million workers around the world, calls upon **governments** to:

- Immediately extend paid sick leave entitlements, maintain incomes and extend social protections to all workers, including formal, 'gig', precarious and informal workers, regardless of their employment status;
- Enact stimulus packages with state spending that aims to sustain jobs and the economy, protecting wages, the welfare of workers, and small- and medium-sized businesses (SMEs); and,



- Cooperate and engage with multilateral institutions and increase aid to countries less able to respond to the threats posed by COVID-19 and ensure that the multilateral financial institutions assess national needs and respond appropriately.

The CGU calls upon **employers** to:

- Recognise and bargain with trade unions to identify threats to workers health, rights and welfare, and to develop and implement workplace responses;
- Recognise and exercise their duty of care for all workers in their business and supply chains and maintain contracts with suppliers, prioritising the rights and welfare of these workers in their response to the threats posed by COVID-19;
- Involve workers' representatives in processes to identify, prevent, mitigate and account for COVID-19 threats and the evaluation of employer and government responses;
- Ensure health protections and plans are in place and are followed without exception;
- Protect wages and full pay for all workers through a variety of means, mutually agreed through collective bargaining;
- Guarantee paid leave, in the form of sick pay or holiday pay, from the first day of leave, for any workers threatened or infected by COVID-19;
- Establish compensation funds for all workers, including non-standard forms of employment and work-related contracts, that are adversely impacted by COVID-19 and the responses to it; and,
- Offer customised and responsible workplace and working arrangements for all workers.

All workers, where necessary, should be provided free medical testing, treatment, training, equipment and facilities for training, especially if they are performing medical services. Special attention must be given to the situation of migrant workers, many of whom are particularly vulnerable. The privacy and personal information of workers must be protected as they undergo medical and other examinations and checks as part of responses to the threat posed by COVID-19. Workers must be able to return to their habitual place of work as soon as is practicably possible should local and/or national containment measures financially or logistically inhibit them from doing so.