



G20 Labor and Employment Ministers' Meeting on COVID-19

L20 Statement to G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting (LEMM), 23 April 2020

Sharan Burrow, General Secretary, International Trade Union Confederation Remarks to LEMM

Thank you to all the Ministers for meeting to address the unprecedented global challenge of COVID-19 and recognizing that it requires a coordinated global response.

We were encouraged to see that the G20 Leaders' Summit, held on 26th March 2020, committed to do 'whatever it takes' to overcome this pandemic and we look to you with the support of the ILO, the OECD and the social partners to take the lead now in the practical measures that are urgently required to protect jobs, incomes and ensure social protection as a basis for social and economic stability.

We acknowledge and thank you for the national efforts to support paid sick leave, wages and income support for workers to include those in non-standard forms of employment. This has in turn helped to stabilise many businesses during this critical period. We particularly appreciate those government leaders who have consulted employers and unions as social partners in the design of these measures.

However, we now need your efforts globally as we could see up to 200 million jobs lost and workers and families without social protection or availability of food such that some 250 million people could be at risk of starvation.

With massive inequality already a social and economic risk, we ask of you three major actions in this emergency period with a further request to be taken up in the next few months

We agree that fighting and overcoming the pandemic is our highest and over-riding priority. Indeed, we are all participating in the greatest act of global solidarity in our history, as people willingly give up civic freedoms to save lives. But you all know the social and economic fear that has also been unleashed. And beyond your borders too many businesses are at risk of collapse and their workers at risk of destitution.

Therefore, we ask that you coordinate a global response:

- 1. G20 support and leadership on global funding for social protection.** This is urgent to add to health funding to ensure income and food distribution for millions of the world's people to avoid starvation. We know that many of you understand this and it will take your leadership to make it happen. Around \$35 billion would secure 5 year funding for the poorest 28 countries in the world to secure emergency relief now and build resilience over time to enable capacity to weather the next crisis. And every dollar beyond that part-funding for lower to middle income countries in dire need. \$100billion is affordable in the context of the \$10trillion or possibly more that will be spent on emergency measures.
- 2. Global cooperation and coherence on support to non-essential global supply chains for business continuity, wages and income support for workers.** When businesses, especially SMEs, are at risk of collapse in wealthier countries then that risk is multiplied many times over in poorer countries. When even MNEs tell us they don't have liquidity to pay for existing contracts then it is indeed an economic catastrophe in the making.

Today the employers and unions (IOE/ITUC/IndustriALL and leading global brands, with the support of the ILO) released an [urgent call for support of emergency funding and social protection for the garment industry](#). This is a model for other sectors in need. We congratulate the EU on the program in Europe and ask for consideration for MNE's with supply chains beyond Europe's borders to have the capacity to pay for existing orders.

And we request particular support for the maritime sector for the coordination of repatriation and deployment seafarers.

And to plead with you to care for migrant workers in your country and extend safety guarantees and income support as you would your own citizens.

- 3. We call on all governments to urge respect for Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work including occupational health and safety.** This is a time for social dialogue to be strengthened to resolve problems, not an opportunity to attack labour laws. We well understand the urgent need for cooperation by all stakeholders.

In the next two to three months as we move beyond the urgent measures required, we urge ministers to work with unions and employers in the coordination of a plan for recovery, reconstruction and resilience. The social partners understand the scope of the challenge and would urge you to enlist finance and health ministries in the quest for a plan that deals with the impact of COVID-19 and the convergent aspects of the pre-existing global crises, many of which the G20 Labour Ministers have addressed in past years. Reducing inequality, ensuring women's participation and increasing labour-income share are all vitally important if we are to see a recovery based on wage-led growth and the consequent and crucial economic demand. The climate emergency is as urgent as it was before this pandemic and just transition measures are needed to respond to that emergency. Now the critical issue of universal access to health must be included.

Your leadership has never been more important. We thank you and pledge to work with you to realise a more resilient future.

The story of Jamila tells you why we need to act now on a global protection fund.



Jamila Hussein a 26 year old with a tea kiosk in Mogadishu says, *“People are no longer coming to our kiosk to buy tea or coffee since Coronavirus started. I am the breadwinner for my family of 9 (father, mother and 7 siblings), feeding them from what I earn after selling tea or coffee. Nonetheless, I cook the tea every morning, but no one comes to my kiosk. Yesterday I did not earn even one (1) shilling, I went home empty-handed.”*