



L20 STATEMENT TO THE G20 LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT MINISTERS' MEETING

9-10 SEPTEMBER 2020

The global trade union movement stands with all workers, men and women, and among them especially those on the front lines for treating and containing COVID-19 and those whose work ensures the provision of essential goods and services.

Government action to increase testing and fund vaccine and treatment research and production is urgently needed. Multilateral coordination in sharing research findings and the rapid production and dissemination of freely available vaccines and treatments is vital to address both the current health and socio-economic impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and to build resilience for all.

EMPLOYMENT OUTLOOK

With 93 per cent of the global workforce living in countries experiencing workplace closures, the COVID-19 crisis is far from over. The ILO Monitor (June 30) calculates that 5.4% of global working hours (equivalent to 155 million full-time jobs) were lost in the first quarter of 2020. That figure is now an equivalent of some 400 million in the 2nd quarter. The ILO estimates that some 292 million jobs in manufacturing supply chains are affected. 1.6 billion workers in the informal economy are facing destitution, without access to social protection.

Even in the absence of a second wave, current OECD projections anticipate record unemployment in the OECD area by the end of 2020 at 9.4%, only to fall to 7.7% by 2021. In the case of large new waves of infection before the end of the year, unemployment is expected

to rise to 12.6% and 8.9% respectively. Low-income workers, minority groups, women and youth are hit hardest. Data shows that non-standard workers might represent up to 40% of total employment in sectors most affected by containment measures across European OECD countries. This reality increases to 60% in emerging countries.

Sectors hardest hit include tourism, aviation, hospitality, catering, arts, entertainment and leisure, manufacturing and retail.

Labour market impacts are evident in massive increases in unemployment, underemployment, lost working hours, and increased informalization. The result is lower incomes, lower job and income security, increased inequalities and increased poverty impacting entire economies.

G20 leadership is required to provide coherent economic and social policies that deliver a recovery based on economic participation, inclusion and that builds trust and resilience.

GOVERNMENT SUPPORT IS NEEDED FOR THE REAL ECONOMY FOR AS LONG AS NEEDED

Governments that are providing financial assistance to maintain income and employment must continue doing so until the crisis is over, with specific targets for sectors most in need. International financial institutions and central banks must take all measures necessary, in line with UN recommendations, to enable countries without fiscal space to assist workers and productive sectors.

Strong social dialogue at national and sectoral level helps governments ensure that economic rescue plans and job retention schemes are sustainable and have impact.

Principles for financial aid and assistance

To support workers, the G20 governments should extend eligibility criteria and the duration of unemployment benefits as well as re-negotiate the scale and coverage of job retention schemes, compensation and job guarantees in dialogue with social partners.

- Financial aid to the real economy should prioritise micro, small and medium-sized enterprises (MSMEs).
- All assistance to employers must be conditional upon preserving jobs and ensuring adequate protective and containment measures.
- Assistance to workers should be granted irrespective of employment status or whether they operate in the formal or informal economy.
- Aid to Multinational Enterprises (MNEs) and lead firms in supply chains should be conditional on respecting fundamental rights and occupational health and safety as well as honouring purchasing contracts, assuming responsibility for workers in the supply chain, and banning unethical financial practices including payment of managers' bonuses, share buy-backs, tax evasion and speculative behaviour.
- Real economy support programs should promote collective bargaining and frameworks for a just transition to a zero-carbon economy, that is, to climate- and employment-proof workplaces.

1. Protect all workers especially essential or frontline workers

The pandemic has exposed the essential nature of work such as health care, childcare and elderly care, education, cleaning services, transport, farm work and the production and distribution of other essential goods. These jobs are often low-wage, precarious and predominantly female or undertaken by migrant workers. Ensuring continuity for economic activity requires a special focus on the needs and protection of frontline workers.

Special action to protect the elderly and care workers

Governments should streamline regulation that protects aged-care and other care workers, considering the vulnerability of chronically sick and older people and that many deaths have been reported in care facilities for the elderly.

Special action to support seafarers

More than 300,000 seafarers are trapped working aboard vessels, and another 300,000 are facing financial ruin at home, willing to return to work. We commend the governments that have brought in options for seafarers to disembark and be relieved by fresh crew, such as visas on arrival and visa waivers.

The G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting (LEMM) should also:

- recognise COVID-19 as an occupational safety and health (OSH) hazard, setting sector-specific hazard reduction and risk management protocols together with social partners and standardising regulation on access to quality personal protective equipment (PPE), time rostering and other virus-containment arrangements, including commuting arrangements;
- recognise the valuable contribution and commitment of essential workers and protect them with higher wages, a safe working environment, and respect their right to unionise and collectively bargain;
- extend paid sick-leave and other leave entitlements to all workers; and
- provide mortgage, rent, and loan relief.

2. Increase social protection and achieve universal public service coverage

The pandemic highlights the importance of public services and social protection. Strengthening and reinforcing access to social protection would help workers, families and communities cope with the worst effects of the crisis. Systems should be made accessible to all workers.

Urgent action is needed to provide shelters and services to victims of domestic violence and workers affected by violence at the workplace as well as increased labour inspection, reporting mechanisms and other action in line with the ILO Violence and Harassment Convention, 2019 (No. 190).

The G20 LEMM, together with the ILO and other UN agencies and the G20 Finance Track, should:

- spearhead the establishment of a *Global Fund for Social Protection for All*, at a cost of \$37 billion over five years, which would help developing countries establish social protection floors; and,
- ensure access to free and universal healthcare, elderly care, education and childcare for all citizens and especially frontline workers in health services and other key sectors.

3. Special action to protect informal workers and promote formalisation

Informal workers and other categories of workers that do not enjoy high levels of protection need access to income support, healthcare and other social protection. Informal workers are disproportionately women, young workers, migrants, black and ethnic minority and indigenous people.

The G20 LEMM should take action to implement all past commitments on formalisation in line with the ILO Centenary Declaration and the ILO Recommendation 204 on Transition

from the Informal to the Formal Economy, and should take special action to address the needs of the following categories of workers:

Ensure regulations are implemented to protect migrant workers

- with customised action in sectors where migrants are employed and implement regulations for seasonal migrant workers;
- by implementing the ILO Private Employment Agencies Convention, 1997 (No. 181), with inspection and enforcement of recruitment practices including the restitution of recruitment-related costs paid by migrant workers who have not been able to travel to their destination country;
- by developing new forms of cooperation between Labour Ministries in migrant-hosting countries and Embassies of migrant workers' countries to address COVID-19 related protection, assistance and travel support; and
- by promoting principles of equal treatment of migrant workers and refugees.

Ensure coverage of platform workers

- by including them in assistance measures and guaranteeing compensation for lost working hours via cost-sharing with work-platforms and other employer entities and
- by obliging work-platforms to assume responsibility towards their workers in line with the ILO Centenary Declaration, regardless of the nature of their employment status.

Ensure protection of domestic workers who are most often informal workers, women and more specifically, migrant women

- with additional assistance and protection and
- by ensuring implementation of the ILO Domestic Workers Convention, 2011 (No. 189).

Increase protection and assistance for persons with disabilities whose access to medical services is affected by the pandemic

- with additional assistance and protection and
- by guaranteeing prioritised access to protective equipment and additional workplace arrangements to protect them from risk of infection.

GOVERNMENT ACTION IS NEEDED TO RESTART THE ECONOMY

“Digital advances have generated enormous wealth in record time, but that wealth has been concentrated around a small number of individuals, companies and countries. Under current policies and regulations, this trajectory is likely to continue, further contributing to rising inequality [...] New technologies, especially artificial intelligence, will inevitably lead to a major shift in the labour market, including the disappearance of jobs in some sectors and the creation of opportunities in others, on a massive scale. The digital economy will require a range of new and different skills, a new generation of social protection policies, and a new relationship between work and leisure.”

António Guterres, Secretary-General - United Nations

The LEMM should standardise and coordinate measures of support but also build consensus around principles for a recovery that ensures full employment and resilience against future global economic and environmental shocks. This will require significant investments in jobs in infrastructure; public transport, health, education and care; industrial policy for a just transition to a zero-carbon economy; development and repair of ecosystems and sustainable agriculture as well as digital connectivity for all.

G20 LEMM action for a just recovery needs to be coordinated with the G20 Finance Ministers to ensure:

- job protection and job creation;
- income protection, minimum living wages, basic income for those in the informal economy, sick or unemployed, and the universal right to freedom of association and collective bargaining;
- Universal Social Protection to build resilience, including for workers in informal work;
- adequately funded universal public health, education and care;
- Just Transitions for climate and technology;
- action to achieve the Sustainable Development Goals and Agenda 2030; and
- conditionality for public/state support to businesses and for procurement including no use of tax havens or shareholder buybacks, along with respect for fundamental rights ensuring fair wages established through bargaining with worksite representation of workers, and occupational health and safety guarantees. These conditions must be accompanied by mandated due diligence for human rights and environmental standards.

This must be the basis of a New Social Contract that rebuilds trust and security for the world’s people.

Ensure gender equality at the workplace and in the labour market

Women are disproportionately affected by the crisis in terms of job losses, risk of informality or withdrawing from the labour market all together, while they carry out household and family care, including the many hours of unrecognised and unpaid labour. Increasing public investment particularly in the care economy and regulating service provision to ensure labour rights would support formalisation and create millions of new jobs for men and women. The G20 should act to protect the right to unionise, observe equal pay for work of equal value, ensure protection from harassment, and ensure maternity and parental rights.

Ensure the prospects of young people

Disrupted education and vocational training, job losses, lack of employment opportunities and increased precariousness affect young people throughout their working lives. As a part of fiscal expansion measures to restart the economy, governments should factor in work subsidies for youth employment, lifelong education, education continuity (including of apprenticeships), and action plans to increase quality youth employment with job security. Building on its 2015 commitments, the G20 LEMM should coordinate action around a Youth Guarantee providing jobs, training and education.

Ensure responsible business conduct in global supply chains

Addressing disruptions in global supply chains should be a priority for saving and creating jobs. Governments should require mandatory human rights due diligence, worker access to grievance mechanisms, and remedy for persons and communities affected by rights violations. Building on its 2017 commitments, the G20 LEMM should support a UN Binding Treaty and provide a global framework for Business and Human Rights, as well as an ILO Convention on business accountability, responsibility and liability. Action is needed to ensure that global framework agreements between multinational enterprises and sectoral union federations are upheld.

Support international industrial policy over manufacturing

As more than half of all jobs in manufacturing supply chains are currently at medium or high risk, threatened by falls in consumer demand and disruptions, the reshaping of global trade and the reconfiguration of international production requires the underpinning of industrial policy and its coordination at international level. Manufacturing remains crucial for economic development and sustaining millions of livelihoods particularly in developing and least-developed countries. The G20 LEMM should advocate for an international industrial policy forum to ensure global dialogue between governments, trade unions and employers' organisations.

Ensure fairness in digitalisation

Governments should regulate against the growing monopoly control of big technology companies driving the data-driven economy and digitalisation in order to enforce labour rights in platform business, guarantee taxation of digital firms, foster industry policy, promote social dialogue for workplace application of new technologies, establish high levels of personal data privacy and protection against surveillance, and promote a data economy that benefits all.

The G20 Labour and Employment Ministers' Meeting has a key role in leading global governance into immediate action to support workers and enterprises and guarantee continuity of economic activity and jobs. Policy coordination should recognise the interdependent nature of our world and make all necessary means available to developing countries as a global response to the virus and economic challenges ahead for the G20 countries.

The global post-recovery economy must be based on a New Social Contract with financing for recovery that meets the test of realising the Sustainable Development Goals.



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