



Statement on the Global Response to CoVID 19

ITUC leadership and 5 of the ITUC's largest affiliates¹

These are extraordinary times. More than four out of five people (81 per cent) in the global workforce of 3.3 billion are currently affected by full or partial workplace closures as countries battle the COVID-19 pandemic.

Responding to the health, economic and social impact of the worldwide pandemic requires close global cooperation between governments and social partners. This is the only way to effectively tackle this crisis and overcome the worst recession of our lifetime.

As union leaders and representatives of working people:

We mourn for all those who are losing their lives and stand together with all those who have lost loved ones;

We salute all the workers, first and foremost in health and care, as well as all those who go out to work each day to keep economies running and societies sustained, risking their lives and wellbeing;

We stand with all the working people whose lives and livelihoods are being put on hold or worse, as efforts to mitigate the virus take precedence - we will fight for them as we always have;

And we stand with those in the poorest countries, deprived of formal jobs, social protection and healthcare -they will not be abandoned.

Wherever you are, and whatever job you do, your union is there to protect you in these uncertain times from risk and protect your livelihood. We take tremendous pride in the work that our members do and in their solidarity at this most difficult time.

We are experiencing today the greatest display of solidarity in human history.

Shutdowns and confinement now cover most of the world's population, in order to protect in particular the elderly and the vulnerable. The solidarity shown by workers must be reciprocated by those with wealth and power.

In this time of crisis, people rightly look to their governments to act. In this crisis that means putting public health first while equally supporting the working families who are in need of assistance. It means leaders working together across borders and across the world. Many governments are doing well, some are doing less well and there are even some who deny the true reality of the pandemic.

¹ AFL-CIO (USA), DGB (Germany), FNPR (Russian Federation), JTUC-Rengo (Japan), TUC (UK)

The virus that causes COVID-19 does not discriminate, but its impacts do discriminate on grounds of class, race and poverty. Every person in the world is affected, and only by the whole world working together can we prepare for life everywhere with COVID-19 as an endemic disease.

The failures of globalisation exposed – now we must put people first.

The pandemic is brutally exposing the flaws in the model of globalisation which has needlessly left so many behind. Public health systems have been deliberately weakened by political choice, leaving billions of people without access. Precarious work has left working people without security, outside social protection systems and consequently facing destitution. Global supply chains, honed to deliver immediate profit, have cracked or broken when the world needs them most to produce essential products like personal protective equipment. Border closures restricting medical and other vital supplies risk stability and can result in avoidable loss of life. Global coordination is needed to ensure access and prevent competition between governments for lifesaving equipment. These failings need to be fixed. People must come first.

While many companies are doing the right thing, there are corporate gangsters who are seeking to profit from the crisis. They must be stopped and governments need to have the courage to put price ceilings and other measures in place.

No government can respond to the pandemic alone.

We live in one world and all our futures are entwined. The rise of the nationalistic right-wing has debilitated the multilateral system, a system which must be urgently revived and reshaped on respect for rights and inclusion to meet the challenge and manage the future. The alternative is unthinkable as exposed today where the shameful behaviour of some leaders, capturing vital supplies at the expense of others, would become the norm and lead the world into devastating conflict. Production of vital supplies has to be ramped up, and the products shared according to need along with the knowledge required to tackle the disease. And the needs are not only short-term. The virus will challenge public health, and safety in the workplace, for years to come.

We denounce the attempts by the extreme right to use this crisis to sow further discord and increase its influence. We reaffirm our absolute commitment to fight against it.

We welcome the decision of the G20 countries to hold a meeting of labour ministers, which should be expanded to include finance ministers and which must include engagement with labour. We call on the OECD to do this as well. Social partnership, bringing together unions, businesses and governments as well as civil society to shape a common agenda, the importance of which was recognised by the G7 at its last Summit, must be central to the response at every level.

In the midst of this crisis, we must also look ahead.

It is working people who are bearing the economic brunt and it is they who will build the future. Where governments and businesses are working with unions in this crisis, the positive results are already clear. That historic lesson must lay the foundations for a future global economy that must be resilient and capable of delivering health and shared prosperity to all. An international community and global economy which is able to overcome converging crises of the pandemic, climate change, poverty and other yet unknown challenges.

A future where women and men are truly equal, where discrimination is no longer tolerated, where work is safe and hygienic and where the rules of work are based on rights and just wages. And where social protection is universal and helps create and enable quality jobs, equitable access and equality for all.

These are essential foundations for peace and co-existence.

Health is a fundamental human right. It does not just co-exist with other rights – it is dependent on them. Massive investment in public health, in the workforce and in regenerating economic activity is essential, and the benefits from that will only flow if rights are respected.

To this end, we call for the establishment of a tripartite global council for recovery, reconstruction and resilience.

The human race is capable of anything if we work together.

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