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Joint Statement on COVID-19 by International Organisation of Employers and International Trade Union Confederation

COVID-19 is threatening the health and the livelihoods of workers and employers globally. It is not a local but a worldwide challenge, requiring a global response. Urgent action is essential from international organisations. The time has come to see the United Nations reform in action. Enhanced cooperation and coordination are required among all actors in the multilateral system. The International Labour Organization and the World Health Organization (WHO) are at the heart of the international guidance to manage this pandemic and identify short, medium and long-term sustainable solutions for individuals, communities, nations and regions.

The International Monetary Fund, the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, the G7, G20, the World Bank and Regional Development Banks need to support focused, efficient and impact-proven measures to economies in need to address the health, economic, employment and social impact of the pandemic for workers in all sectors of the economy including the self-employed and non-permanent, casual and informal workers, and all of business, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs). For this, the global economy needs urgent measures and policies that reach the real economy. At the national level, the UN Resident Coordinator is called upon to focus primarily on Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 3, together with SDG 8 – Decent Work and Economic Growth.

COVID-19 will also have major economic and employment impacts. Millions of companies worldwide are in danger of being forced out of business with grave impacts on employment. **We need to act now quickly and responsibly,** minimising the social and economic consequences. We need to find innovative solutions for the masses of workers and businesses who will be impacted through labour market resilience, support and adaptation to limit the unemployment fallout and the loss of income due to the Covid-19 outbreak.

The International Organisation of Employers (IOE) and the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) and their constituents stand in solidarity with governments and underline the critical need for social dialogue at national and multilateral levels to design measures to overcome this impact.

We call for urgent action in the following key areas:

- **Business continuity, income security and solidarity are key to prevent the spread and protect lives and livelihoods** and build resilient economies and societies. For this, the global economy needs urgent measures and policies that reach the real economy, workers and business, especially small and medium enterprises (SMEs). Supply chain disruption for medical products, food and other essentials must be minimised through intergovernmental cooperation

- We stress in the strongest terms the important role that **social dialogue and social partners play in the control of the virus** at the workplace and beyond, but also to avoid massive job losses in the short and medium term. Joint **responsibility is needed** for dialogue to foster stability.
- **Policy coordination and coherence is of the essence.** The United Nations, and especially the WHO, must take into consideration the need for protecting employment and income through strengthening social protection measures in both the resolution of the pandemic and in setting the foundation for the employment and economic conditions for recovery and must recognise the key role the ILO plays and collaborate in urgently tackling the social and economic consequences of the COVID-19 crisis.
- **Strong and functioning health systems are key to combatting a pandemic.** Employers' and Workers' Organisations (under the leadership of IOE and ITUC) urge governments to deploy all possible resources, but we are also ready to support Governments in their effective use of health facilities and resources, especially in those areas where the health systems are weak or where the pandemic is spreading particularly fast.
- **The 2019 ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work contains critical elements** that are key to any long-lasting and sustainable response to pandemics including the COVID-19.

In short, all efforts need to be undertaken to help workers and companies to go through the crisis, to keep workers in their jobs, to protect from unemployment and loss of income, and to alleviate financial devastation. **IOE and ITUC are committed and prepared to support policy makers in their efforts.**
