



20 April 2020

Open Letter to Their Excellences G20 Employment Ministers

Re: C20 Recommendations to the G20 Extraordinary Employment Ministers Meeting

Your Excellences,

As you convene for an extraordinary Ministerial Meeting, the Civil Society 20 Engagement Group (C20) would like to share its perspective during this challenging time in human history. The C20 provides the non-business and non-government voice, derived from our experience on the ground serving our communities. We hope that your response to this crisis, and the unprecedented negative impact expected in the global labor market, will be guided by the principles of **inclusivity, human rights, and social justice**.

As we enter one of the most severe economic recessions, the cost on households, workers and businesses is expected to be damaging. The International Labour Organization predicts that the equivalent of 195 million jobs will be lost due to the pandemic, only during the second quarter of this year. Out of those who will manage to keep their jobs, more are likely to be suffering from working poverty. According to Civil Society [estimates](#) half a billion people will be pushed into poverty as a result of the outbreak of the pandemic. We anticipate that many groups will be severely hit and disadvantaged by the current crisis: **precarious and informal workers, healthcare workers, women, refugees, domestic workers, people living in working poverty, care workers, people with disabilities, immigrant workers, and youth. We urge the ministers to tailor their commitments to address the needs of those groups.**

As government officials rush towards economic reopening, we have to be cautious and guided by science and public health experts as to when, how, and the incrementalism necessary to **gradually and safely put workers back** with the greatest care, protection, and safety.

We welcome this year's G20 presidency's prioritization of social protection as part of the employment stream, which should support Employment Ministers in considering **stronger social protection measures and schemes** in this time of crisis. According to the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC), only a few of the 15 G20 countries that were surveyed on the response to COVID-19 provided

employment protection for workers in self-isolation and even less countries provided paid sick leave.

We ask that all G20 countries commit to strong and equitable labor policies and employment protection programs that must include:

- Ensuring **safe work environments** for essential workers on the frontlines now, and for those returning to work as social distancing measures ease. Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) Authorities should give all workers the **right to safe and healthy working conditions**, free from all hazards and harm; including from COVID-19. Policies should specifically address protection from infectious diseases in the workplace with expanded routine safety inspections on workplaces.
- Mandating employers to **establish workplace preventative measures** to reduce risk for safe operations, including physical distancing, hand washing, respiratory etiquette, and potentially, temperature monitoring, in-line with the WHO technical guidance for workplaces.
- **Ensuring safe and adequate housing and wellbeing** for workers, especially domestic workers and immigrant workers, with immediate measures to **reduce overcrowding**, and guarantee decency and access to adequate and safe drinking water, sanitation and hygiene, as well as physical and mental wellbeing, maximum working hours, and mandatory days off.
- Accelerate **recovery in employment** and reduce the time lag between economic recovery and a recovery with decent work opportunities by working closely with the ILO in supporting the "**Global Jobs Pact**".
- Ensuring that governments and business are able to provide adequate paid sick leave, and universal health coverage.
- Expanding **social protection coverage and adequacy** of benefits by approving **wider wage and income support** for workers and households during the lockdown
- Providing **relief** on workers' and households' mortgage, rent and debt.
- **Protecting jobs** by subsidizing at least 40% of wages for at-risk and hard-hit workers and sectors to avoid job losses and dismissals
- Strict monitoring of **dismissal cases** and ensuring **grief mechanisms** are in place for dismissed workers
- Maintaining the **tripartite dialogue** between government, employers and trade unions
- Prioritizing **debt cancellation** and pauses for independent workers and SMEs
- All stimulus packages and support should **not exclude** any social worker, the care economy, or workers in charities and non-profit organizations



Moreover, the C20 believes that special attention should be awarded to healthcare workers who are being put under extreme pressure to attend to the pandemic. Women, who constitute 70% of the health working force globally, are critically being impacted by the crisis. We are alarmed by reports of **female health workers facing special discrimination and stigma** as they attend to COVID-19 patients. We require that they are **protected and compensated fairly and equally**.

Women also deliver the majority of unpaid care work. G20 countries must ensure legal, economic and labour market policies are in place **to protect the rights of all carers and paid care workers**, and monitor their implementation. This should include ratifying ILO Convention 189 on the protection of domestic workers to ensure that **all care workers are paid a living wage** and working towards the **elimination of gender wage gaps**. Also, unpaid care work needs to be recognized and accounted for.

In addition, youth continue to be highly disadvantaged when it comes to economic participation. **A staggering 267 million young people (aged 15-24) are not in employment, education or training (NEET)**. Young people need to be able to pursue their full potential. Female NEET remain left behind, stereotypes and structural and normative barriers to female labor participations are needed to be addressed now more than ever.

We ask, Your Excellences, to consider these policy recommendations and priorities with a sense of urgency and seriousness. We hope to see our input being submitted for a deliberation by the meeting parties.

We look forward to being able to inform and participate constructively in your upcoming meetings, and wish you the best in your endeavor to lead the G20 during this challenging time to come together for the benefit of our shared humanity.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of several fluid, overlapping strokes.

Nouf bint Muhammad

Civil 20 Engagement Group Chair, *on behalf of*

The C20 Steering Committee, International Advisory Committee, and Working Groups