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20 March 2020

## **OPEN LETTER TO G20 HEADS OF STATE AND GOVERNMENT**

### **Global business and workers are united in call for coordinated action by G20 leaders that leaves no one behind in response to the COVID-19 pandemic**

Dear world leaders,

We are writing to you on behalf of the International Chamber of Commerce (**ICC**), the institutional representative of over 45 million businesses, and the International Trade Union Confederation (**ITUC**), the global voice of the world's working people.

We welcome the recent announcement by the G20 Presidency to convene a virtual summit this coming week in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. G20 leaders have a uniquely important role to play in stemming the growing human and economic costs of the current crisis. We are resolute in our belief that only coordinated global action will be effective in tackling a threat that, by its very nature, knows no borders.

In this context, we collectively call on G20 leaders to commit to immediate action to:

- **Get infection control and medical products into the hands of those who need them the most.** The G20 must reverse—and commit to avoid—export bans or limits on the free flow of all necessary medical supplies, medicines, disinfectant, soap and personal protective equipment. We note with severe concern the reported doubling of export restrictions for essential COVID-19 related products over the past week.

The growing use of beggar-thy-neighbour policies must be brought to an immediate halt—not least given the globally integrated nature of supply chains for medical products, food and other essential products. Short-sighted trade restrictions will only exacerbate the potential long-term toll of a virus that crosses borders with ease.

- **Provide direct support to support small businesses and workers.** Micro, small and medium-sized enterprises—which form the backbone of the world economy and their workers who account for upwards of 80% of employment in many countries—will be the hardest hit by the economic impacts of COVID-19. We call on G20 leaders to commit to urgent stimulus and safeguard measures to support MSMEs and the income of affected workers—including those in the informal sector—and avoid rampant unemployment. We must maintain the viability of the millions of small businesses and the security of jobs across the world upon which so many workers and families rely. An urgent scaling up of social protection for displaced workers and those in quarantine must also be agreed.

- **Enable the private sector to support testing:** As WHO Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has repeatedly stated, the urgency of this crisis calls for a whole-of-government, whole-of-society approach. We call on G20 countries to work collaboratively across public and relevant private providers to improve testing for COVID-19 on a non-discriminatory and accessible basis. This necessitates unleashing the full forces of the private sector in support of the public health authorities to test at scale with appropriate privacy guarantees. A few countries have taken steps in this direction, but immediate action is needed now to save lives.
- **Increase international assistance:** A crisis at home is no excuse to leave the most needy behind. We call on G20 leaders to significantly scale up financial assistance to help the world's poorest countries deal with the likely effects of COVID-19—both by increasing aid funding for public health programmes and broader income and social protection measures as central to economic interventions. All necessary government support for business should seek to help ensure adequate paid sick leave for all workers and, above all, keep people in work.

We reiterate our firm view that only effective global cooperation can contain the potential human and economic toll of COVID-19. The limits of inward-looking policies are already patently clear. ICC and ITUC are already taking urgent action to ensure our networks take all necessary measures to mitigate the effects of COVID-19. Beating COVID-19 will take all of us working together. We stand ready to do more—and social dialogue is more critical than ever at this time—but your political leadership is urgently required.

Yours faithfully,



Paul Polman  
ICC Chair



Ayuba Wabba  
ITUC President



John W.H. Denton AO  
ICC Secretary General



Sharan Burrow  
ITUC General Secretary