



## MEETING THE CHALLENGE OF THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC - ITUC-AFRICA MESSAGE TO AFFILIATES

As the global pandemic of corona virus COVID-19 rages on around the world, the number of affected African countries is increasing rapidly. As of Tuesday, March 17, there were 450 cases of patients infected with Covid-19, spread across 30 countries out of a total of 54 on the continent.

The world of work and life generally is being profoundly affected by this pandemic since in addition to the threat to public health, the accompanying economic and social disruption threatens the livelihoods of millions of people.

Governments, workers and employers all have critical roles to play in combatting this global health emergency to ensure the safety of persons and the sustainability of economic activities and employment.

ITUC-Africa salutes the sense of duty, bravery and sacrifice of the public health workers and professionals who are in the frontlines of defence against this dreadful virus, despite the significant risks involved. We salute also the care givers and workers of essential services who have to continue working to ensure that life can go on minimally.

As part of the ongoing efforts to effectively prevent and respond to the pandemic, governments are taking measures, which include public education on the virus, closing of schools and universities, banning and restricting public gatherings, quarantining suspected persons and closing air and land borders.

ITUC-Africa supports these measures taken at country level and calls for even more effort at providing public awareness to help combat the pandemic. We also call on African governments to undertake emergency investments in public health infrastructure including sanitation and hygiene, and in particular, ensuring public access to potable water to facilitate public cleanliness.

We call on all unions to work with employers to make workplaces more hygienic and safer for all employees. We also call on employers to institute measures that restrict the spread of the

virus in the world of work including introducing flexibility in work delivery and the possibility of working from home where this is feasible.

We call for guaranteed sick leave and income security for workers infected or threatened by COVID-19 as well as pay for those who have to stay at home to care for the sick or children who have had to stay away from school as part of national preventive measures against the spread of the virus.

At this time of real threat to our common survival and humanity we also urge our governments to pay attention to the most vulnerable sections of the African population who have no social protection cover and no income security and are bound to be hardest hit by stiffer measures of national shut downs and lock downs that would be aimed at combatting the pandemic.

Finally, we call on governments to facilitate access of all to free screening for the virus and effective care for those who are already sick from it.

In the meantime, we call on workers and their families not to panic but to take responsibility in contributing to measures taken by governments and the public authorities to halt the spread of the pandemic and to contain it.



**Kwasi Adu-Amankwah,**

**General Secretary, ITUC-Africa, Lome, Togo, March 18, 2020**