

Ayuba Wabba

President
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Mr. Victor Orbán
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Sharan Burrow

General Secretary
Secrétaire générale
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Secretaria General

HTUR/JB

22 April 2020

Request to revoke Government Decrees 18.03 and 10.04

Dear prime Minister,

I write on behalf of the International Trade Union Confederation and its 200 million workers in 163 countries, including Hungary, to express our strong objection to the recent Government Decree on the measures to mitigate the Covid-19 impacts on national economy (18.03), which suspended the provisions of the Labour Code for the period of state of emergency; as well as Government Decree (10.04) on the extension of the working time frame (reference period) to 24 months. The latter gives employers the freedom to unilaterally impose overtime with the payment to be settled at the end of the 24-month cycle.

While trade unions stand ready to support measures to reduce the economic impact of the epidemic, we join our national affiliates in their opposition to the content of the regulation as well as their unilateral way of imposition. Although the tripartite consultation forum for the private sector (VKF) continued to meet, the decisions were made without any consultation of trade unions.

The proposed measures would constitute clear violations of international human and labour rights standards enshrined in international treaties to which Hungary is a party. As recently recalled by the ILO, the Covid-19 crisis should not be used, even temporarily, to dismantle human rights and social rights, in particular trade union and workers' rights.

This COVID-19 crisis is a brutal reminder of the importance of the protection of workers' rights. When implemented, the anticipated measures would suppress demand and structurally undermine Hungary's economy. This irresponsible initiative stands in stark contrast to the constructive measures being taken by many other Governments around the world in close collaboration with trade unions and employers' organisations.

The 4th ITUC Congress in Copenhagen in December 2018 already adopted a resolution in support of the mass protests of Hungarian workers against anti-worker legislation. The current bills further extend these exploitative measures. We, therefore, have reason to believe that the changes to the Labour Code are the implementation of deliberate government policy in violation of International Labour Standards rather than a response to an emergency, and we fear that they will not be revoked after the situation stabilises.

The improvement of competitiveness cannot be based on the deterioration of workers' position and on attacking their rights - neither in Hungary nor in other countries of the European Union or any other part

of the world.

The ITUC therefore urges your government to revoke the Decrees without delay and to engage in good faith social dialogue to develop measures to protect jobs and wages while upholding the rights of workers and citizens in response to the ongoing crisis.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'A. B.', written in a cursive style.

General Secretary