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HAK İŞÇİ SENDİKALARI KONFEDERASYONU
HAK-İŞ TRADE UNION CONFEDERATION

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General Secretary
ITUC
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HAK-IS Confederation Informative Report on Fighting against COVID-19 Pandemic

Subject: Briefing on updated policies and measures applied in fighting against COVID-19 in Turkey

As you know, from the very beginning Turkey has closely observed the outbreak of COVID-19 and responded quickly through putting in place all the necessary precautions to slow down the spread of the new coronavirus. All early and quick efforts to tackle the spread of COVID-19 across our country were highly appreciated by the people.

HAK-IS Confederation is closely following all the newest developments regarding the spread of the virus across the country and we continue working in coordination with the authorities with respect to all the precautionary measures taken by the government. Within this framework, we continue briefing both the national and international organisations about the latest information related to the COVID-19 outbreak.

All institutions and organisations across the country have reacted in a precautionary manner to tackle the spread of coronavirus under the leadership of the president of the republic. In this shoulder-to-shoulder struggle, a number of arrangements and a package of comprehensive economic measures have been taken at the level of social and working life to the benefit of all segments of our community.

As HAK-IS Confederation, we would like to update you about the latest necessary preventative measures that were put in place to stem the spread of COVID-19. We also wish to brief you about the role of trade unions and all related social partners in fighting the pandemic.

Within this framework, the new precautions and policies are the following:

- 1) Under the instructions of our President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan, in December 2020, the Ministry of Health issued a circular letter availing a compensation from the occupational disease fund to all frontline health workers who lost their lives because of COVID-19 pandemic. In addition to this, in case the health-care

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personnel are infected while they are performing their job at their workplace, the condition will be defined as an occupational accident and the disease as an occupational disease in both public and private sectors.

- 2) Upon the proposal of Turkey, the year of 2021 was designated and approved as the International Year of Health and Care Workers.
- 3) The right to full benefits under short-time working arrangements that was applied since March was extended until June 2021. In the framework of short-time employment, the allowance reached TRY 23,371,396,000 for almost 3,582,000 workers. Applications were made via E-Government.
- 4) In the fight against the coronavirus pandemic and amid efforts to revive economy and shield employment, our government provided a normalisation package to all workers and sectors affected by the coronavirus pandemic. The normalisation package is a premium pay package given to private sector workplaces for insured workers who avail from short-time work benefits until they get back to normal working hours.
In addition, the 3-month benefit period was extended to 6 months.
As part of the recovery process, approximately TRY 2.5 billion of social security premium liability were given to employers along with the normalisation pay package provided to 3.184.000 workers who went back to normal working order.
- 5) In order to retain and increase employment, the government extended the period of the additional stimulus package that regulates premium and tax support for employers until December 21, 2020.
- 6) Within the framework of the “Social Protection Shield” process that was launched to minimize the negative effects of COVID-19 pandemic, almost TRY 45.5 billion in support and assistance was provided to citizens for 9 months. The support that was provided in the scope of the “Social Protection Shield” can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ At the first stage, TRY 2 billion was made to 2 million households.
- ✓ At the second stage, TRY 2.316 billion was made to 2.316 million households.
- ✓ At the third stage, up to now TRY 1.950 billion support payment was made for 1.950 million households (A one-off payment of TRY 1,000 per household).





Furthermore, the donations raised in the campaign “We are enough for each other, my Turkey” were periodically transferred to the accounts of the families in difficulty to the amount of TRY 1,000 per household. The total collected amount raised to TRY 2,053,282,000.

7) The cash assistance was distributed as follows:

- ✓ Around 2 million workers who took unpaid leave received TRY 6.5 billion while almost 1 million people on unemployment allowance received TRY 4.5 billion.
- ✓ According to a presidential decision, starting January 2021, the minimum wage increase rate (21.56%) must be reflected in the “Cash Pay Support”, “Back to Employment Incentive” and “Plus Employment Incentive” applications.
- ✓ The Cash Pay Support offered to employees who were took unpaid leave will be paid with an increase of 21.56% starting from January 2021.

8) Following a Cabinet meeting held on March 1st, 2021, President Recep Tayyip Erdogan identified all the methods and procedures related to the new controlled normalisation process taking into consideration all recommendations made by both the Ministry of Health and the Coronavirus Scientific Council. Within this context:

- ✓ According to the criteria determined by the Ministry of Health and the Coronavirus Scientific Council, the provinces will be classified into four different risk groups (low, medium, high, very high) and the level of preventive measures to fight the virus will be put in place according to the risk groups.
- ✓ Public working hours will get back into normal across Turkey and the governors will apply additional arrangements, if needed.
- ✓ Provinces with high and very high-risk rates are left out of these arrangements with the exception of face-to-face exams for high school students.
- ✓ The weekend curfew restrictions will continue on Sunday in high and very high-risk provinces for a while longer. Restrictions on citizens who are older than 65 and younger than 20 will be lifted in low and medium-risk provinces while they will continue in high and very-high risk provinces.
- ✓ All pre-school institutions, including primary schools and 8-12 grade institutions, will open across Turkey.
- ✓ All restaurants and coffee shops will open from 7 am to 7 pm with just 50% capacity, excepting very high-risk cities.



Turkey and COVID-19 Vaccination Programme

- As a result of the agreements concluded by our Country, the Sinovac vaccine was approved for use throughout Turkey where 50 million doses are expected to be delivered. Up to March 18, 2021, 12.552.774 doses of vaccines have been applied. 7.996.415 people have received the first dose while 4.556.359 people were been injected their second dose of vaccine. With its planned and quick strategy, Turkey has achieved a great success in vaccination roll out.
- Turkey has approved the BIONTECH vaccine for use. The government stated that it expects 4.5 million doses to be delivered by the end of March this year. Almost 30 million doses are expected to be delivered upon an agreement reached between the parties under the same conditions.
- In addition to that, Turkey continues its efforts to develop a local COVID-19 vaccine at national level. The Ministry of Health stated that the local vaccine phases will be successfully concluded in April.
- As a result of the vaccine-related supply, the vaccination programme was put in place quickly throughout the country. Within this context, the Ministry of Health set an online informative platform to update the public about the vaccination process. This platform provides updated information about the vaccination roadmap, answers to frequent questions related to vaccination and the latest data on the number of people vaccinated.

Turkey's efforts to tackle the COVID-19 Pandemic are highly appreciated on the international arena.

- The World Health Organization (WHO) Regional Director for Europe Hans Kluge praised Turkey's activities and leadership on delivering accurate data about the COVID-19 developments and reaffirmed its commitment to support Turkey in its fight against COVID-19 Pandemic.
- The World Health Organization (WHO) stated in its report that Turkey was the first country among the European countries to fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. The report discussed all preventive measures that were put in place with determination and the achievements that were made due to multi-sectoral approach to tackle the virus.



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- Turkey's efforts and success in fighting against Coronavirus was mentioned in the EU Progress Report. The European Commission publishes annual progress reports evaluating the progress achieved by the candidate countries. The 2020 progress report was published on October 6 to assess the management process implemented by countries in fighting the pandemic at global level.
- The Report was published in English and Turkish and emphasized Turkey's fight against COVID-19. It pointed out all the necessary measures taken by the Ministry of Health to minimize the burden on health institutions and its frontline workers, as well as to protect public health. This report has also underlined that the Turkish Health System dealt with the COVID-19 in a very successful way.

HAK-IS Confederation's activities:

- HAK-IS is an effective and dynamic trade union movement that champions human and labour values. HAK-IS which strives to set out new policies in the working life has fully contributed and supported all measures to stem the spread of COVID-19 that hit the world and our country on March 2020. The major activities conducted by HAK-IS can be summarized as follows:

- ✓ We rejected the state of emergency across the country and supported uninterrupted and safe production process.
- ✓ We called for equal rights and conditions for our 83 million citizens and the 4 million immigrants who live in Turkey.
- ✓ We have prepared a number of action plans in cooperation with our occupational health and safety committee.
- ✓ HAK-IS Executive Board adopted a number of decisions to fully implement all the necessary preventive measures to fight the pandemic.
- ✓ We have systemically updated the international trade union movement about the latest developments related to the virus.
- ✓ We have set up a new working order for the entire HAK-IS staff and shortened their working hours.
- ✓ We have regularly distributed masks and hygienic materials to our staff.
- ✓ We have organised a number of informative activities to urge all workers to take the necessary preventive measures at HAK-IS, Affiliated Unions and organized workplaces.





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- ✓ We have assigned the Labour Guesthouse owned by HIZMET-İŞ Trade Union (an affiliated public services union) to the Ministry of Health frontline workers.
 - ✓ We have issued joint statements with all social partners related to the working life.
 - ✓ We have implemented a number of activities with the support of ITUC-AP that we are a member of in order to extend the Occupational Health and Safety Measures in fighting the virus.
- Upon the decision taken by HAK-IS Executive Board, all affiliated unions carried out their activities and meetings via digital platforms.
 - HAK-IS has continued its supportive activities not only for its staff but also for the frontline health workers who are courageously and relentlessly working every day to help us all in the fight against the deadly COVID-19 virus. Accordingly, we have assigned the Labour Guesthouse owned by HIZMET-IS Trade Union (an affiliated public services union) to the Ministry of Health frontline workers.
 - Since HAK-IS was established we continued closely following all matters that concern our community alongside with practicing an effective trade unionism that champions human and labour aspects. We are determined to stand up and back up our country whenever it is needed.
 - HAK-IS, TISK and TÜRK-İŞ have jointly signed a tripartite cooperation agreement aimed at supporting all our members to further benefit from social and economic rights during the pandemic and continue the production in an effective and uninterrupted way. As HAK-IS Confederation:
 - ✓ Preventing dismissing workers during the time of fighting against the pandemic.
 - ✓ Facilitating the provision of the short-time work benefits.
 - ✓ All patients with chronic diseases must avail from the short-time work benefits.
 - ✓ We requested that all workers who received a short time work allowance should get additional payment and benefit from all other fringe rights as well.
 - ✓ All activities done by HAK-IS were appreciated at both national and international level. Within this context, ITUC-AP supported our confederation in providing and distributing the hygienic materials.





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- With the support received from ITUC-AP we held training programs about the usage of hygienic materials at the level of HAK-IS structures in the territory.
- The outbreak of COVID-19 underlined once again the importance of occupational health and safety measures and its timely implementation. We have emphasized that COVID-19 pandemic must be considered an occupational disease in the report issued by HAK-IS occupational health and safety committee. At the same date, ITUC, to which HAK-IS is an affiliated member, published a declaration whereby it states that COVID-19 pandemic must be recognised as an occupational disease.
- We place great importance and support on all the preventive measures taken by our country in fight against the virus. Indeed, we are totally aware of our responsibilities and we will submit our point of view for improving the situation whenever needed.

Best Regards,

Mahmut ARSLAN
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