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Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation (MOLSI) Government of Malawi (GoM)
Employers Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM)
Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU)
International Labour Organization (ILO)

Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation launches new COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines

“Our message is clear: Safety and health at work can save lives and help stop the COVID-19 pandemic”, said **Honourable Minister of Labour, Skills and Innovation Lilian Patel**, M.P., Secretary-General of the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (**MCTU**) Mr. Denis Kalekeni, Executive Director of the Employers Consultative Association of Malawi (**ECAM**) Mr. George Khaki, and International Labour Organization (**ILO**) Country Director for Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique Mr. George Okutho in a joint statement to commemorate this year’s World Day for Safety and Health at Work, celebrated on 28 April each year.

Responding to the novel Coronavirus pandemic that is now affecting Malawi, the Ministry of Labour, Skills, and Innovation (MOLSI) yesterday (27 April 2020) issued new COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines that set out specific requirements for employers and employees to prevent workplaces from becoming a platform for transmission of the COVID-19 virus. Amongst others, the guidelines require hand-washing facilities, office cleaning, shift working, physical distancing, teleworking, sick leave, phone and virtual meetings, provision of appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) at no cost to employees.

“Government through the Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation (MOLSI) enforces the Occupational Safety, Health and Welfare Act, which aims at guiding workplace owners and employers to establish and maintain a working environment that is conducive to safety,

health and general welfare of employees and all persons lawfully present at the workplace”, said Minister Patel. “The new COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines are informed by global standards including those of the International Labour Organization (ILO) to which Malawi remains proudly committed. In November 2019, Malawi deepened our commitment by ratifying three new International Labour Standards (ILS) on Occupational Safety and Health (OSH), namely ILO Convention numbers 155, 184 and 187. These international treaties provide us with a valuable guiding light and benchmark OSH practices and standards here in Malawi. Building on these standards, we are currently compiling a new OSH Profile for Malawi that will help us to make recommendations to address any identified gaps”, explained Minister Patel.

Honourable Minister Patel applauded **His Excellency the State President, Professor Arthur Peter Mutharika** for the timely announcement of measures to prevent the spread of coronavirus. Recognising the importance of Public Health (Coronavirus Prevention, Containment and Management) Rules, 2020 issued announced by Minister of Health on 8 April 2020 pursuant to the Public Health Act, Minister Patel has commended the Special Cabinet Committee on Coronavirus for the good work achieved within a short period of time. Minister Patel noted with appreciation that the Public Health Rules designate a number of essential services including healthcare, law enforcement, defence, security services, utilities (water and sanitation, gas, and electricity), communication and media, agriculture and fishing, mining and quarrying, manufacturing and transport of food, health and hygiene products, legal and financial services, and the wholesale and retail of food and essential products such as sanitizers and disinfectant. “The COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines complement and reinforce the Public Health (Coronavirus Prevention, Containment and Management) Rules, 2020”, said Honourable Minister Patel.

“The new COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines are just one part of the Government’s response how the novel Coronavirus pandemic stands to impact on the world of work in Malawi. The Employment and Labour Force Protection Cluster established under the Government’s National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan will ensure that the labour force is protected throughout the crisis through enhancing Occupational Safety and Health (OSH) protections, developing needed skills, ensuring sound industrial relations, and expanding the quality and coverage of social protection”, said Honourable Minister Patel.

“The new COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines were developed by the Ministry of Labour, Skills and Innovation through consultation with employers represented by the Employers’ Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM) and with workers and trade unions through the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) as well as businesses through the Malawi Confederation of Chambers of Commerce and Industry (MCCCI) drawing upon the technical expertise of the International Labour Organization (ILO)” said Honourable Minister Patel.

Malawi Congress of Trade Unions (MCTU) has welcomed the COVID-19 Workplace Guidelines - “Trade unions and workers’ organisations, including our affiliates representing workers have a key role to play in ensuring that workers remain safe on the job during the crisis, for example through workplace health and safety committees that include trade union representatives”, said MCTU Secretary-General Mr. Denis Kalekeni.

Employers Consultative Association of Malawi (ECAM) Executive Director Mr. George Khaki echoed his organisation’s support for the measures, saying: “As responsible business operators, our members are committed to complying with the national workplace COVID-19 health and safety measures and promoting international best practice guidelines such as those of the ILO and WHO”.

International Labour Organization (ILO) Country Director for Zambia, Malawi and Mozambique Mr. George Okutho said that: “Recognizing that governments, employers, workers, and the whole of society around the world face great challenges in combatting the COVID-19 pandemic, the theme of this year’s World Day for Safety and Health at Work, celebrated on 28 April each year, is to address the outbreak of the novel Coronavirus in the world’s workplaces, and we have just launched a new global report and set of actionable tools on ensuring safety and health at work in the face of the pandemic. In Malawi, the ILO is supporting the Government, workers, and employers to prepare for and respond to COVID-19 by reinforcing the social protection and labour protection clusters of the National Preparedness and Response Plan and sponsoring rapid assessments of the impacts of the crisis on the labour market, so that the ILO can support our partners and the broader United Nations (UN) country team to target our responses for maximum impact. Ensuring meaningful social dialogue between government, workers and employers is essential for ensuring that action will be sustainable and effective”.

Honourable Lilian Patel, M.P.
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