

STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY FOR LABOUR DURING THE ILO REGIONAL MEETING ON COVID 19 AND THE WORLD OF WORK

Moderator, thank you for giving the floor to Malawi. I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Secretary for Labour, Skills and Innovation, Dr. Esmie Kainja who is attending to other equally important issues. As you may be aware, the Minister is yet to be appointed since we have just had Fresh Presidential Elections.

In Malawi, as of today, 2nd July, 2020, we have about 1,342 cases and have had 16 deaths due to the Pandemic. In the recent past, we have experienced an upward trend. Apart from cases registered among the returning residents, we are of late experiencing local transmissions. This poses a threat to our infant health system.

Moderator, Malawi, like many other African Countries, in Mid-March, instituted measures to prevent, contain and manage COVID-19. We developed the National Response Plan. Through Tripartite Dialogue, we also developed policy response to mitigate the spread of Coronavirus in workplaces; protect jobs and incomes; safeguard the health and safety of employees; ensure business continuity and promote innovative business solutions through social dialogue. Unfortunately, these coping measures have socio economic consequences.

Schools have remained closed since 23rd March, 2020. Private Schools have lost income and had no choice but to lay off employees, including teachers, and temporary closed. Employees in the education sector therefore lost income. Likewise, the hospitality industry has drastically been affected leading to massive retrenchments. The number of hours of work have been reduced in many sectors. Most employers implemented pay cuts and sent workers on forced leave or pandemic leave. The informal sector has not been spared. Retails outlets for some products were closed. Demand for goods declined due to liquidity challenges. The civil service is operating in shifts and service delivery has be reduced to less than half. The List is endless.

Through the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, we are now working on the Policy responses for economic recovery and gradual return to work and new normal. We are committed to shape the Future of Work we want, built on the foundation, which guarantees a better normal. The Pillars of the Decent Work agenda are essential in this regards. Coincidentally, we have just finished developing of our second generation of our Decent Work Country Programme (DWCP) prioritizing; **employment creation; ratification and application of standards and fundamental principles and rights at work;** and **social protection**. Social Protection has been extended to cover semi peri-urban poor. Social dialogue has been mainstreamed in all priority areas. We affirm our commitment to implement the Decent Work Country Programme.

The importance of the Centenary Declaration adopted by the 108th Session in June, 2019 and its human centred approach to the future of work cannot be overemphasized. To this end, we are committed to shape our vision and agenda to guide further action to advance social justice as provided by the Declaration. We therefore call upon the ILO to provide the necessary guidance to ensure successful implementation of the Declaration to manage the Future of Work in Member Countries.

We look forward to the tangible outcomes of this regional meeting, which should be inclusive, embracing objectives of the regional and global frameworks such as; the ILO Centenary Declaration, the Abidjan Declaration, the African Union (AU) Agenda 2063, the ILO's Decent Work Agenda and the UN 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development (2030 Agenda).

I thank you