**THE COVID-19 ECONOMIC EFFECT ON YOUNG WORKERS**

**BWI INTERNATIONAL YOUTH COMMITTEE STATEMENT**

The novel coronavirus, known as COVID-19, has so far infected more than two million people worldwide, and fatalities have already exceeded one hundred thousand. Even though the virus hits people over 65 hardest, young people are being infected and even dying too. It should be noted that young people are good at showing no symptoms but spreading the virus.

Affected countries have announced severe measures and travel restrictions to mitigate the outbreak and its economic impact. With workers self-isolating in their homes there is a significant decline in economic activities. Already there is strong evidence emerging of a coming global economic crisis that could be worse than any crisis seen in generation. The [Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD)](http://www.oecd.org/economic-outlook/#resources) has projected the slowest global economic growth since 2009.

It is inexcusable that young workers are already up to three times as likely to be jobless than adults, however the coronavirus threatens to supercharge that economic insecurity. Precarious work and unsafe are already the norm for many young workers for whom the economy has failed to create decent work. We are concerned that this crisis could hit young workers even harder than the 2007-08 global financial crisis, and the long-term impact on job creation could be catastrophic.

Under these circumstances, there is an ultimate need of strong union power to fight against predicted side effects of the virus on labour market. Young workers need unions more than ever now, and now is an important time for unions to create a new space in which young workers can determine the future of the movement. Young workers should take part in negotiations with companies and governments and take initiative to run campaigns to defend their rights and to raise public awareness on the realities of the pandemic. It should be stressed that since young workers can be critically ill and even die, they should also be protected at the same level by necessary OHS measurements at workplaces.

The BWI International Youth Committee is therefore calling for:

* Immediate economic and social measures by governments to avoid a drastic increase in youth unemployment such as employment protection, wage subsidies, access to unemployment schemes, emergency measures such as paid leave, access to insurance schemes for young workers and their families;
* Full access to personal protective equipment for young workers, as well as mandatory implementation of safety procedures appropriate to prevent the spread of covid-19, including social distancing
* Full access to free healthcare and treatment for young workers showing symptoms of COVID-19;
* negotiations by trade unions further for short time trainings and needed technical support to equip young workers with necessary skills enabling them to re-roll and to participate in the future of work

Amandla for the young workers’ fight for a better future, as there is a world to change now! Amandla for solidarity!



**Lebohang Vincent Ramabolu**

BWI International Youth Committee Chair