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## **BWI Workers' Voices Webinar Series 2: Unions Make Work Safe**

### **Global webinar on OHS and COVID-19**

**Date: 16 September 2020**

**Time: 15h00 Geneva (2.5 hours)**

While COVID-19 has resulted in a global public health crisis of a scale never seen in our lifetime. Occupational health and safety, job and wage protection and economic and social security has been paramount in the response of trade unions to COVID-19.

BWI affiliates must ensure that they participate, together with government and employers, in the development and implementation of health measures on worksites that address COVID-19 while maintaining other health and safety standards. Affiliates must also ensure that OHS clauses in collective bargaining agreements, workplace policies on OHS, national OHS and public health laws and guidelines and recommendations of the national public authorities on OHS, public health and COVID-19 are fully respected and properly implemented at organised workplaces.

This webinar will take forward the mandate from BWI affiliates on OHS encapsulated in the BWI COVID-19 Declaration adopted by the BWI World Board in May 2020.

### **Final Programme**

**Continuity and technical host:** Apolinar Tolentino, BWI Asia Pacific Regional Representative

#### **1. Introduction (10 minutes)**

**Welcome:** Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary Unite UK and BWI Deputy President

**Opening remarks:** Ambet Yuson, BWI General Secretary and introduction in the context in the COVID 19 declaration

#### **2. Worker Voices Presentations (30 minutes)**

**Asia:** SERBUK, Indonesia, video presentation

**Africa:** Thandiwe Mupane, CLAWUZ, Zimbabwe, in person presentation

**Europe:** Lejla Catic, president, Trade Union of Forestry, Wood Processing and Paper in Bosnia and Herzegovina, video

**Europe:** Sukru Durmus, TARIM ORMAN-IS video

**Latin America:** Luiz Queiros, CONTICOM, Brazil, in person presentation.

**Gulf:** Leo Dote, BMKQ OSH adviser, Qatar in person with video back up.

<p><b>3. Expert discussion on issues raised by workers (40 minutes)</b></p> <p>Discussion facilitated by <b>Gail Cartmail, Assistant General Secretary, UNITE, UK.</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Joaquim Pintado Nunes</b> is currently the chief of the LABADMIN/OSH (Labour Administration, Labour Inspection and Occupational Safety and Health) Branch of the International Labour Organization (ILO).</li> <li><b>Dr Sophia Kisting</b> is an Occupational Medicine Specialist and the <b>Executive Director of the National Institute for Occupational Health (NIOH) in South Africa</b>, currently . She is also a former Director at the ILO where she managed the HIV and AIDS Global Programme to protect human rights at work and to ensure decent work in the context of HIV and AIDS.</li> <li><b>Gopal Naidoo, Member of the Practice Committee of the Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland.</b> He is a co-author of the RIAI Proposals for the Reopening of Construction Sites in April 2020. His work has promoted good practice and the adoption of suitable protocols to the industry.</li> <li><b>Fiona Murie, Former BWI Director on OHS</b></li> </ol>
<p><b>5. Break (10 minutes)</b> Video presentations</p>
<p><b>6. Launch of the COVID-19 guide for trade unions (5 minutes)</b> Presentation of the guide: Tos Anonuevo, BWI Education Secretary</p>
<p><b>7. Trade union response to COVID-19 (20 minutes)</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Developing the role of the safety rep on COVID19: Rob Miguel, UNITE, UK. (In person)</li> <li>Establishing a protocol on COVID 19 in Forestry: Louisa Jones, First Union, New Zealand (Video presentation)</li> <li>Establishing a protocol on COVID 19 in Construction: Mauro Posadas, UOCRA. (In person)</li> <li>Efforts to classify COVID19 as an occupational disease: Apolinar Tolentino, BWI regional Representative Asia Pacific (in person)</li> </ul>
<p><b>8. Open discussion (30 minutes)</b> Open floor discussion on trade union responses to COVID-19 by bringing those that wish to ask questions from the floor into the panel.</p>
<p><b>9. Close (5 minutes)</b> <b>Thanks:</b> Ambet Yuson <b>Final Close:</b> Gail Cartmail</p>

**Additional information from the BWI Declaration on COVID-19**

The demands on OHS detailed in the declaration, are:

- *There should be the universal recognition and respect for fundamental worker rights on freedom of association and the right to organise freely, on OHS, as well as the inclusion of workers and their representatives in workplace risk assessments. Joint OHS Committees in the workplace should be tasked with establishing measures to address COVID19 risks and reporting on adherence.*
- *The International Labour Organisation (ILO) should take urgent action to establish the right to safe and healthy work as a fundamental right and principle of the ILO, thereby giving it the status of other internationally recognised human rights.*
- *International institutions and governments should recognise COVID-19 as an occupational disease. Such a status would protect rights related to preventative measures to avoid becoming infected and protections if the disease is contracted as well as defining responsibilities of government and employers.*
- *Governments should ratify ILO Convention 167 on Safety and Health in Construction in which there are rights to preventative and protective measures including that all appropriate precautions are taken to ensure that all workplaces are safe and without risk of injury to the safety and health of workers.*
- *Industry specific protocols on health and safety related to COVID-19 should be developed with unions that include universal health screening and testing at workplaces during the pandemic.*
- *Governments should expand and strengthen their regulatory system to address COVID-19 and reinforce their labour inspectorate. Regular joint inspections should be conducted during the pandemic and unions should be able to freely access workplaces to observe conformity with health and safety requirements.*
- *Worker representatives together with the trade unions should be able to shut down the site if health and safety measures on COVID-19 are not implemented making the workplace unsafe. If this right is not protected, it would be an appropriate priority for the bargaining table, lobbying and campaigns.*
- *A worker should have the right to refuse work considered to be unsafe or that jeopardises health, particularly if the worker has concerns related to COVID-19 based on age and existing health conditions. If this right is not protected, workers that exercise this right should be defended and the issue should be prioritised in workplace negotiations and advocated for in national policy formulations.*
- *Health and safety issues on COVID-19 should be addressed at the workplace and accommodation of remote workers and migrant workers. New measures should be formulated to address the added vulnerabilities of migrant workers in construction and forestry that live in crowded accommodation with shared facilities, conditions that can increase the risk of spreading the disease.*