



## **Position and orientations of the TUCA against the Covid-19 Pandemic**

This document contains a series of measures that are already being proposed by many of our affiliates in various countries of the Americas in response to the crisis. In addition to the political formulations of the Trade Union Confederation of the Americas (TUCA), it is essential to consider respect for all human rights, as well as fundamental principles and rights at work as established by the International Labor Organization (ILO) [https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS\\_739937/lang--en/index.htm](https://www.ilo.org/global/standards/WCMS_739937/lang--en/index.htm). Likewise, we share the systematization of union responses to the World Survey of the International Trade Union Confederation (ITUC) on COVID-19, <https://www.ituc-csi.org/encuesta-mundial-covid19>, which can serve as a reference of our action.

It is necessary to keep in mind that beyond the urgent and necessary responses, this crisis, before being sanitary and public health, is a crisis of the neoliberal economic system and shows the failure of its policies to reduce the State, privatization, precariousness of the work and social rights.

For the TUCA, the real response to the crisis will have to be focused on medium and long-term emergency measures. The Pandemic, in addition to showing the failure of neoliberalism, will open a dispute over the economic, social, and political model in the Americas and the world.

Effective emergency actions to guarantee people's lives will only be possible with the abandonment of the neoliberal paradigm and state intervention, based on democratic principles, in various areas.

The democratic option is the only way to build the path to overcome the crisis in the medium and long term at the regional and international level. The measures to combat the virus cannot be confused with authoritarian positions that take advantage of the situation to deepen authoritarianism, exclusion and the attack on countries that are considered enemies by the great powers.

We defend the immediate end of the financial embargoes and economic sanctions imposed on Cuba and Venezuela to guarantee the attention of the population in these countries. TUCA considers important that this measure can be adopted in other regions of the world. The defense of people's lives cannot be confused with opposition to governments or political systems of different ideological signs. We reaffirm our inalienable option for Democracy, for the democratic rule of law and the sovereignty of peoples and nations.



Today, multilateral organizations and international financial organizations must establish a global fund to finance all countries for the care of the population.

The IMF, World Bank, IDB, G20 must open financing lines to the countries without the demand for structural adjustments or an increase in indebtedness. The purpose of these lines of financing is to serve the population, strengthen public health systems, research for vaccines, hospital materials, massive test kits, as well as the supply of food and basic products. hygiene, housing for people in street situations, minimum income, employment and wages for workers.

We defend immediate legislation to impose taxes on large fortunes, inheritances and profits of large companies. Especially the speculative capital of the financial sector and the tax havens, which continue to hide the money from corruption, drug trafficking and other crimes in the world. The pharmaceutical and health companies that are profiting from this crisis must respond to the health needs of the population with price reductions, universal care, and the release of patents, among other measures.

From the TUCA we guide to all our affiliated and fraternal organizations to be on the front line to face the crisis, committing to these general political lines and the specific proposals listed below.

### **Workers at the heart of the pandemic response**

1. Strengthening / activation of tripartite, bipartite social dialogue mechanisms, as well as other instruments of broad social dialogue, in order to guarantee that the definition and establishment of measures in the framework of the pandemic are taken with the participation of unions and social organizations with the aim of protecting the basic rights, life, work and health of the working class in its diversity.
2. Collective Bargaining is the main tool to guarantee dialogue, in this sense, it is essential to guarantee the ultra-activity of collective bargaining for 180 days or until the crisis is overcome.
3. Guarantee of job and salary stability for workers, through existing public policies or with the creation of new mechanisms that guarantee the employment and income of workers, whether in formal or informal conditions (direct income transfer mechanism).
4. Adopt, restore or expand comprehensive social security regimes and other social protection mechanisms, considering national legislation and international agreements, in order to guarantee the right to all workers regardless of their conditions of employment. formality or informal employment.

5. Prohibition of the suspension or termination of contracts for the provision of temporary services during the time of the emergency, for all national or territorial public entities, centralized or decentralized services, as well as the private sphere in all its modalities, under the bankruptcy, low productivity, loss of earnings, among others.
6. In order to guarantee the stability of employment and wages, teleworking has been implemented in response to economic paralysis; however, in the region most of our countries do not have or are insufficiently regulated; It is important to emphasize that it is essential that this modality does not precarize and make existing labor relations more flexible, on the contrary, it must have as its premise the guarantee of employment in accordance with ILO standards.
7. Protect all workers who, by integrating risk groups, have agreed to a medical license in the context of the emergency; as well as all those workers who were on leave (medical, maternity, vacation, etc.) prior to the crisis.
8. Provide all necessary supplies to health workers and to all public and private workers who are at the service of our peoples facing this crisis on the front line.
9. Guarantee the access of the working class and society in general to information about the severity of the pandemic through the media, without any type of censorship or intervention, ensuring that they fulfill their role of reporting so that contribute to the prevention and guarantee of the health of the workers and the population in general.

#### **Attention to the diversity of realities of the working class**

1. Guarantee food, hygiene and housing for people in street situations from a rights-based approach and paying special attention to those who are part of the population at risk. This includes: provision of residential homes for the elderly or with pre-existing illnesses in the street, provision of public and inclusive hygiene spaces with products prepared for this purpose (toilet paper, gel alcohol, soap, water, showers, sinks) , distribution of individual food and water kits.
2. Strengthen, resume and / or implement food distribution plans and hygiene items for vulnerable families, including access to energy sources for domestic use (cooking, heating). It is essential to have a price control policy for all the items included in the basic basket and extend it to the regulation of rates for basic services (water, electricity, gas, etc.), including the free provision of these services for the population that requires it.
3. Inclusion of migrant workers, refugees and their families in all existing social protection policies or those implemented to deal with the crisis.

4. Strengthen, resume and / or implement policies for the prevention and care of domestic violence, especially gender-based violence and abuse in children and adolescents that are increased in situations of self-isolation and preventive and / or compulsory quarantine.
5. Inclusion of workers in informal conditions and precariousness to policies and benefits that already exist or that are implemented during the period of the pandemic. Informal workers are present in various sectors of activity: platform economy, domestic work and care economy, mobile workers, retail, self-employed, among others. This includes special subsidies, extension of social security and social protection (distributive and non-contributory policies), reduction and / or freezing of rates for basic services and access to hygiene and food products.
6. Guarantee of wages for those workers who do not provide their services due to self-isolation measures and compulsory quarantine: domestic worker, care worker, sex worker, who are forced to continue exercising their activity. to be able to feed their families and the stigmatization and discrimination that they are subjected to in society, reinforcing their vulnerability.

#### **Workers must not pay for the crisis**

1. States must respond by guaranteeing the rights of the general population and demanding payment by those who have historically benefited: large companies and transnational capital.
2. International financial institutions must be at the service of peoples' financial needs. The aid granted by these institutions cannot mean a new cycle of indebtedness of the countries, causing present and future restrictions or conditioning them on structural adjustment plans.
3. The State is responsible for guaranteeing access to health for all the affected and at-risk population. It is urgent to increase investment in health, both in adaptation of infrastructure, purchase of health and hygiene supplies and in the payment of wages and guarantee of decent working conditions for workers linked to the sector. Reducing spending and privatizing the sector must be reversed as the first step in dealing with the pandemic.
4. It is necessary to define measures to expand public spending to respond to this situation that include: unemployment benefits; reductions in rent, tax or service payments; basic monetary transfers for workers in informal or precarious conditions, from the countryside and from the city; subsidies for small agriculture and family farming; support for SMEs and micro SMEs that guarantee

- the payroll of their workers; payment to caregivers / es for workers who are on the front line of care, among others.
5. The measures of attention to the sanitary, social and economic emergency require the suspension and / or elimination of restrictions on investment and social spending, as well as the fiscal reforms that have been proposed and / or imposed in some countries.
  6. Suspend the payment of public debt service in the current context and, when necessary, request its renegotiation by governments, under conditions that allow autonomy in the definition of public policies for the future. On the other hand, in relation to the private debt of SMEs, freelancers and workers, offering alternatives for renegotiation or suspension of payment of quotas, designing new lines of credit, under conditions of low interest and favorable terms, for the most affected by the crisis.
  7. Suspend or reverse the tax reforms that have exonerated large companies and increased taxes for the general population. It is necessary to orient direct and progressive taxes, collect taxes on large fortunes, profits and illicit funds, collect taxes on evaders, as well as transnational companies; in this way, the necessary expansion of fiscal spending can be financed. The working population cannot continue to bear the cost of public spending with indirect and regressive taxes or with wage cuts to contribute to funds to combat the pandemic.
  8. It is urgent and necessary to regulate prices and guarantee the supply and access for the entire population of the products in the basic basket. Likewise, support small and medium merchants in the sale of national production and the implementation of public purchasing policies, which contributes to generating a positive effect on the economy in the medium term.
  9. In relation to transnational companies, negotiate and regulate rates and royalties, for example, for telephony, communications and energy.

### **Democracy and Solidarity**

1. Trade unions are actors in democracy, representatives of a fundamental sector of society, linked to workplaces, communities and territories and connected to the needs of the population. Our role in the face of the current contingency is of the highest order and we demand our participation, strengthening the mechanisms of tri and bipartite dialogue, as well as in other instances of participation and dialogue with the other actors in society, committed to facing the crisis.
2. The Americas are territories of peace. The measures taken by governments to stop the spread of the virus cannot lead to increased militarization, violence and



- criminalization in the territories. Social isolation is the most effective measure for the non-spread of the virus, according to recommendations of the World Health Organization (WHO). The measures cannot prevent access to food, medical care, hygiene supplies and other essential goods during the entire period in which they are in force, so safe access must be guaranteed without consequences for the personal integrity of those workers. they must move.
3. The police and military security forces must be deployed in a measured way, avoiding generating alarm states in the communities. The presence of military and security forces (public and private) in the region are often associated with situations of violence and operate with impunity criminalizing protests and the exercise of freedom of expression. Isolation cannot become the excuse to further criminalize union and social leaders. We call on the judicial organizations and the international community to maintain compliance with public security measures that may threaten freedom of association and the rights to peaceful protests, respecting the measures directed by the WHO for non-agglomeration in order not to spread the virus.
  4. The working class, especially in the Americas, has a historical legacy of building networks of national, regional and international solidarity in times of restricted rights, freedoms and attacks on democracy. In this pandemic we call on all trade union and social organizations to join forces and activate these international solidarity networks, since they will be essential to sustain the popular classes in times of health, economic and social crisis.

The TUCA, our unions, allied organizations and social movements will continue to be united by another world, not only possible, but necessary for a healthy planet, for our peoples in defense of civilizing advances for humanity.

We will continue to struggle!

**Montevideo, 30<sup>th</sup> March 2020**