

## **COVID-19: UN Experts call for international solidarity to alleviate financial burdens of developing countries and the most vulnerable**

### **Statement of the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights**

GENEVA (7 April 2020) – In a statement released today, the UN Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights has called on global leaders to work in solidarity to relieve financial burden of developing countries through international financial institutions, and to safeguard jobs and wages, as well as secure food and medical supplies for the most vulnerable.

‘Now is a time when international solidarity is crucial to decisively combat the COVID-19 pandemic’ said Mr. Renato Zerbini Ribeiro Leão, Chair of the Committee. ‘Particularly as the virus spreads to developing countries and countries with weaker health systems, countries should cooperate regionally and internationally to confront this global problem together’.

‘States should seriously consider lifting economic sanctions to avoid weakening health care systems and obstructing much needed medical equipment and supplies’ said Mr. Renato Zerbini Ribeiro Leão. ‘States should also use their voting powers in international financial institutions to alleviate the financial burden of developing countries to combat the pandemic, including through provision of debt relief. International cooperation can also take the form of financial and technical assistance to promote economic, social and cultural rights, particularly of the most vulnerable’

States parties to the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights have to cooperate with other States to complement national programmes to promote economic, social and cultural rights. International cooperation can occur bilaterally or multilaterally, through the UN and through international financial institutions, to mitigate the impact of the pandemic on most at-risk persons, including older persons, persons with disabilities, migrant workers, refugees and conflict-affected populations, minorities and indigenous peoples.

In its statement, the Committee identified targeted measures needed to protect economic, social and cultural rights, including provision of water, soap and sanitizer to communities lacking such access; targeted protection of jobs, wages and benefits to workers; protection of workers from the risk of contagion; mitigation of the economic impact of COVID-19, including through wage subsidization and tax relief; a moratorium on evictions or mortgage bond foreclosures; prohibit profiteering on essential products; and promotion of income support and other relief to ensure food and income security.

While many of these measures have to take place at the national level, international cooperation, in the form of financial and technical assistance, can do much to support and guide such measures, particularly for poorer and less-prepared countries.

‘The Committee will monitor the actions of States over the coming months and years, including measures taken nationally and internationally in response to the COVID-19 pandemic’, said Mr. Zerbini Rebioero Leão in closing.

Read the Committee's full statement at:

(<https://undocs.org/E/C.12/2020/1>).

\* **Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights** is a body of 18 independent experts established by ECOSOC to monitor the implementation of the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights.

\*\* **Mr. Renato Zerbini Ribeiro Leão** is the Chair of the [Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights](#) since 2019, and is a Committee Member since 2011. Mr. Zerbini Ribeiro Leão is the holder of a PhD in International Law and International Relations from the Universidad Autónoma de Madrid, has published extensively on matters relating to economic, social and cultural rights and is currently Professor at the University Center of Brasília.

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