

Joint Statement

“The Government Must Have Strong Measures to Guarantee Workers’ Health and Safety at Work in the COVID-19 Crisis”

We, as representatives of trade unions, associations, communities and civil society organisations working in the labour and human rights sectors in Cambodia join in the global campaign for occupational health and safety as part of **Workers’ Memorial Day**. This day is commemorated annually on the 28th of April to push stakeholders to acknowledge the importance of promoting occupational health and safety for employees in all workplaces across the world, as well as in Cambodia.

Occupational health and safety is of paramount importance in the contribution of employers, unions, the Government, development partners and civil society organisations for joint action to overcome the COVID-19 pandemic in Cambodia. The COVID-19 pandemic poses challenges for us to maintain productive processes whilst workers’ health and safety are of primary attention in the workplace. Many employers have acknowledged that guaranteeing occupational health and safety has many important economic and production benefits in the workplace. Unions see the importance of COVID-19 safety in the workplace as something which the Government and employers must pay more attention to, but many employees today continue to face a lack of COVID-19 safety in the workplace. This causes high risks in overcoming this deadly pandemic to ensure the recovery of the well-being of people and employees in all sectors, economic recovery and social order and stability in Cambodia in the future.

The collapse of under-construction buildings in Preah Sihanouk Province in 2019 and Kep Province in 2020 were tragedies for employees in the Cambodian construction industry. After these two incidents, we have observed that the Royal Government, through the Ministry of Land Management, Urban Planning and Construction found many unauthorised construction sites not using proper construction techniques, affecting public order. Many workers became victims of workplace accidents and lost their lives yearly. In the garment and footwear sectors, workers face a transportation system which takes them from their homes to the workplace in trucks lacking proper safety specifications and carrying excessive numbers of workers. There is no safety supervision and many workers have lost their lives in road accidents while travelling.

It is time to reform the state policy system to promote occupational health and safety and these rules must be routinely applied to companies, enterprises and institutions. The provision of suitable facilities for informal economy workers is also a necessity, requiring the involvement of workers’ representatives, the competent authorities and civil society organisations in the necessary national and lower-level policy reform processes in order to ensure social order for informal economy workers in Cambodia.

Separately, we as representatives of union federations, associations, communities and civil society organisations working in the labour and human rights sectors in Cambodia observe that the current

COVID-19 situation has severe effects to the livelihoods, health and safety of construction, service, hotel and informal economy sector workers stemming from the crisis and the strong lockdown rules of the Royal Government in red zones and locked down areas in Phnom Penh and Kandal. So far, approximately two thousand employees have been found to be COVID-19 positive in more than 90 factories in Phnom Penh and a number of other factories. The biggest concern for workers' health and safety and risks are in other factories which have not yet found COVID-19 cases and workers will face a risk of returning to their workplace in a situation where there is no guarantee of occupational health and safety.

From seeing the risks and challenges to workers' occupational health and safety detailed above, we, as representatives of trade union federations, associations, communities and civil society organisations working in the labour and human rights sectors would like to make the following requests to the Royal Government and relevant stakeholders:

1. Create a mechanism with workers' representatives, employers, civil society organisations to monitor and evaluate occupational health and safety, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic at construction sites and construction companies.
2. Push for regular, effective and transparent labour inspections to be conducted to inspect occupational health and safety conditions and immediately all construction companies across Cambodia with the National Social Security Fund (NSSF).
3. Provide reasonable, clean accommodation to employees and pay additional attention to the provision of personal protective equipment such as masks, hand sanitiser and temperature checks in the workplace at factories, enterprises and establishments which have not yet implemented the Ministry of Health's rules or the World Health Organisation's guidelines to ensure that workers are safe at work.
4. Review workers' system of travel and ensure social distancing in transportation to factories during the COVID-19 pandemic.
5. Issue clear measures in workplaces facing risks, in particular at factories, and allow workers to take paid leave at appropriate times.
6. Put in place social assistance programs such as emergency aid including food and other daily necessities provided in a timely manner during periods of lockdown, in particular for workers in red zones.
7. Arrange clean, safe and suitable areas for traders, street vendors, market vendors and public vendors.

This joint statement is endorsed by;

1. The Cambodian Human Rights and Development Association (ADHOC)
2. Sahmakum Teang Tnaut (STT)
3. Cambodia Youth Network (CYN)
4. Cambodian Alliance of Trade Unions (CATU),
5. Independent Trade Union Federation (INTUFE),
6. Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (COMFREL)
7. Coalition of Cambodian Farmers Community Association (CCFC)
8. The Cambodian Food and Service Workers Federation (CFSWF)
9. Building and Wood Workers Trade Union Federation of Cambodia (BWTUC)
10. Independent Democratic of Informal Economy Association (IDEA)
11. Cambodia Tourism Workers Union Federation (CTWUF)
12. Cambodian Center for Human Rights (CCHR)
13. National Independent Federation of Textile Union of Cambodia (NIFTUC)
14. Labor Rights Supported Union of Khmer Employee of Nagaworld (L.R.S.U)
15. Center for Alliance of Labor and Human Rights (CENTRAL), Cambodia
16. Solidarity House (SH)
17. Cambodian League for the Promotion and Defense of Human Rights (LICADHO)
18. Youth Resource Development Program (YRDP), Cambodia
19. The Cambodian Human Rights Action Coalition (CHRAC)
20. Cambodia Labor Confederation (CLC)
21. Equitable Cambodia (EC)
22. Free Independent Trade Union Federation (FUFI)
23. Coalition of Cambodian Apparel Workers Democratic Unions (C.CAWDU)
24. Cambodia Transportation Workers Federation (CTWF)
25. Cambodian Industrial Workers Federation (CIWF)
26. Cambodian Informal Economic Workers Association (CIEWA)
27. Farmers Association for Peace and Development (FAPD)
28. Cambodia Tourism Service Workers Federation (CTSWF)
29. Cambodia Agriculture Workers Federation (CAWF)
30. Coalition Free Trade Union of the Women Textile (CFTUWT)
31. Cambodia Institute for Democracy (CID)
32. Asian Tourism Employee Union of Raffles Le Royal Hotel (AEURLH)
33. Workers' Solidarity Strength Independent Union (WSSIU)
34. Transparency International Cambodia (TI)
35. Coalition for Integrity and Social Accountability (CISA)
36. Cambodia Independent Civil Servant Association (CICA)
37. Neutral and Impartial Committee for Free and Fair Elections in Cambodia (NICFEC)