The UAE firmly believes that the best way to address the pandemic is through international solidarity and global cooperation, and by ensuring the protection of labour, as well as the rights of all, irrespective of citizenship or status. In this regard, I would like to share with you the UAE's own evolving experience to date in the labour sphere, and affirm our commitment to openness and learning as the pandemic continues.

Our country is determined to "leave no one behind" and align our response to COVID-19 with the Sustainable Development Goals. The UAE Government shares the ILO's view that policy coordination and coherence is of the essence. Accordingly, the UAE Government has adopted a multifaceted response to the COVID-19 pandemic, grounded in the principles of public trust, transparency, and inclusiveness. The measures that the UAE Government has taken to protect workers and mitigate the economic impact of the pandemic have been based on three pillars: ensuring the safety and health of workers and their work environment, protecting employment, and enhancing social services.

Key measures include:

Supporting the economy, enterprises and employment

- The UAE Government has sought to mitigate the negative impacts of COVID-19 and enhance job security for all workers in the UAE through measures designed to protect employment and support the economy. These measures include a US$70 billion stimulus package for the UAE economy and businesses, budget allocations to small and medium enterprises, measures to enable the internal movement of work permits and reduce employer recruitment costs, and the granting of regulatory relief by UAE authorities, such as fee waivers and refunds, fast-tracking the payment of government invoices, and Cabinet decisions directed to reducing utility bills for businesses.

- In addition, the UAE Central Bank has implemented a US$27 billion targeted economic support scheme to alleviate liquidity issues faced by businesses.

Ensuring the Safety and Health of the Workforce and Work Environment

- The UAE Government has implemented one of the most ambitious and accessible testing programmes globally; 14602082 have been carried out to date. Testing is free for all if they have COVID-19 symptoms or fall into a category of vulnerability or exposure (e.g., recent travel, contact with potentially infected persons, age, type of employment, etc).
- The UAE Government has made COVID-19 treatment services free and available and accessible across the country for all.
- To ensure the protection of workers' safety and health, as well as physical distancing, the Government has prescribed requirements for private sector workplaces, transport, and accommodation during the COVID-19 pandemic. We are taking active steps to work towards the implementation of these requirements, including through inspections of workplaces and accommodation, the imposition of penalties for violations, and the availability of hotline services for workers to submit complaints of non-compliance to the authorities.
- To ensure adequate and accessible information for all, the Government's dedicated information centre for COVID-19 is provided in Arabic, English, Urdu, Chinese, Hindi, Tagalog (Filipino) and Bengali. There is a proactive programme of education and visits to migrant workers to provide

information on COVID-19 safety and precautionary measures, and the healthcare and other support available to them. The UAE Government has additionally partnered with private employers to guarantee information is provided in the language of employees' understanding.[1]

● The UAE is also partnering with private sector employers to provide protective equipment, ensure social distancing (including encouraging remote working, where possible), ensure the sterilisation of work facilities, and to issue mandatory certification in advance of restarting economic activity.

<u>Protecting Migrants in Work</u>

One of the challenges presented by the COVID-19 pandemic is its potential to affect the significant number of migrant workers in the UAE, who are important and valuable contributors to our society. The UAE Government is determined to protect them from the threat of COVID-19, and in this regard is taking specific measures to ensure that their protection forms an integral part of UAE's public health and recovery response to COVID-19. These measures include the following:

● The UAE is specifically protecting the health rights of migrant workers, irrespective of their nationality and migration status, by guaranteeing access to free diagnostic testing and treatment for COVID-19. Major testing campaigns are being conducted in vulnerable communities, free of charge and without regard to the legal status of workers. Migrant workers benefit from access to the same doctors, hospitals, and medicines as anyone else in the UAE. The UAE's testing programme provides migrant workers access to *polymerase chain reaction* (PCR) testing for early diagnosis and treatment. Workers who test positive for COVID-19 are provided accommodation with safe and sanitary facilities in which to quarantine; those who require hospitalization are referred to the nearest facilities in an expanding network of established and temporary hospitals across the Emirates. Those over 50 and with co-morbidities are also provided separate accommodation. There are also social support programmes providing medical aid for non COVID-19 needs.

● Under UAE law, employers without work during the COVID-19 pandemic must register workers in a virtual labour market to facilitate employment of their workers by other employers; they must, in the meantime, maintain responsibility for workers' basic expenses (e.g. accommodation, food, and medical insurance). Any other changes to employment contracts require the consent of both parties, and such changes to contracts are monitored and registered with government authorities.

● The UAE Government has automatically renewed visas for workers through December 31, 2020. We are committed to ensuring that no one falls into irregular status due to the pandemic. The UAE Government has also made arrangements to ensure that the various services relating to workers' legal status are available by phone and online, and do not require any in-person visits.

● The UAE does not deport employees whose employment is disrupted by the pandemic. To ensure that those who wish to return home – temporarily or permanently – are able to do so, the UAE Government is facilitating dedicated flights for migrant workers. UAE law further

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[1] Arabic, English, Urdu, Chinese, Hindi, Tagalog (Filipino) and Bengali.

permits equitable temporary repatriation for currently employed migrant workers, by allowing employers and employees to reach an agreement on temporary repatriation, requiring employers to pay for return flights. During the period of temporary repatriation, employers are required to continue honouring their contractual obligations to workers and provide the entitlements prescribed by UAE law. For those migrant workers who do travel home, the UAE Government is taking steps to mitigate the risk of transmission of COVID-19 by conducting serology/antibody testing of workers and encouraging them to quarantine for 14 days upon their arrival home. The UAE has also provided significant medical aid to migrant workers' home countries.

● The Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratization operates an online and phone hotline service to report any violations of labour contracts and rights.

● To encourage the retention of migrant workers by employers, the Ministry of Human Resources and Emiratisation has enacted Ministerial Decree No. 279 of 2020, enabling workers to take full advantage of their annual leave prior to its accrual date, allowing workers to socially distance or return home for a period of time.

Humanitarian Measures

● The UAE Government is supporting and facilitating a number of programmes designed to assist with employees' basic living needs, including the '10 million meals' campaign; the provision of support for medical, food, education and other basic needs; and the provision of support to the families of those who succumb to COVID-19, regardless of their nationality and for the duration of the pandemic.
● The UAE Government has also taken steps to ensure food security, and has imposed strict price control measures to ensure essential goods remain available and accessible to consumers.

● Employees of the Federal Government with responsibility for caring for minors or first-degree relatives suffering from COVID-19 have been granted paid leave, upon their request.

● All workers in the UAE are entitled to paid sick leave, in accordance with Article 82 of the UAE Labour Law, including during their probationary period.

In the spirit of global solidarity, the UAE is committed to supporting efforts in other countries to address the COVID-19 pandemic and uphold the principle of maintaining the welfare and rights of all employees. To this end, the UAE has taken a number of measures, including:

● **Close UN partnerships**. The UAE Government supports the WHO Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan and related humanitarian appeal as the over-arching framework for response. We are directly contributing to UN agencies, namely through in-kind contributions of personal protective equipment (PPE) and airlifts. Our collaboration with the World Health Organization in China, Somalia, and Ethiopia forms a strong precedent. We have also partnered with the UN Medical Services Division at headquarters in New York to open a testing programme for UN and Member State mission staff, to enable continuity of operations and a return to work.
● **Dubai International Humanitarian City (DIHC) and logistics**. We remain committed to the efficacy and impact of DIHC and the infrastructure that enables the fast and safe movement of

humanitarian cargos and personnel. The Dubai hub has processed more than 132 shipments to 98 countries to date, and more than 80% of the WHO's PPE distribution.

- **Coordinated bilateral assistance**. To date, the UAE has provided 410 tons of medical aid, such as testing kits and PPE, to 40 countries across the globe, based on cooperation with the countries' governments and ministries of health. These supplies are supporting the critical work of more than 410,000 medical professionals. We are also committed to coordinating this work with the UN. Our partner countries include those affected by conflicts, natural disasters, or political tensions, such as Somalia, Afghanistan, Sudan, Iran, Ethiopia, and Colombia.
- **Repatriation assistance**. The UAE has assisted the evacuation of students and citizens of several countries from Wuhan and received them in the Humanitarian Medical City in Abu Dhabi, where they were provided with medical and other care required before repatriation.
- **Migrant welfare**. In our role as 2020 Chair of the Global Forum on Migration and Development, the UAE has instigated a series of initiatives aimed at understanding and ameliorating the impact of COVID-19 on migrants, migration and development. This includes the collating of best practices from UN agencies, civil society, business and local administrations, the organization of two webinars – open to all – to better understand the issues, and the formation of an Ad Hoc Working Group to take forward the establishment of partnerships to the GFMD Summit in 2021.

The UAE is well aware of the significant and unprecedented challenge presented by the COVID-19 pandemic, which can only be overcome through global cooperation. We also understand the critical importance of protecting the welfare and rights of all people in the UAE and beyond.