

G20 Labor and Employment Ministers' summit on COVID-19

Below is the speech given by the Secretary of State. Following the virtual meeting, the Ministers issued an [agreed statement](#)

Thank you Minister and good afternoon everyone.

Thank you for bringing us together today. I believe that we, as G20 Labour and Employment Ministers, have a responsibility to provide a strong and coordinated response to the impact of COVID-19 on our labour markets.

This pandemic highlights the importance of the global family and our shared commitment to the multilateral framework. In just a few months, everyday life has changed dramatically across the world and we have all felt the profound impact of this virus on our countries and communities. The UK shares the deep sadness caused by the tragic loss of life and the suffering faced by people across the world. I reiterate the commitment made by our leaders during the G20 summit in March, that tackling the pandemic should be our absolute priority. I welcome the adoption of the G20 Action Plan by our finance ministers last week, and in particular the commitments made to protect our workers.

I also applaud the G20 presidency on their pledge of \$500 million that Saudi Arabia have announced to the global effort to combat COVID-19. It's a great example for us all.

I thank the ILO, OECD and the World Bank for your detailed analysis of the impact of COVID-19 on our labour markets. I also thank the B20 and L20 for their contributions.

We share the same objectives – to protect workers and businesses, while enabling everyone to return to a strong working economy as quickly as possible.

During this emergency, the UK government has and will continue to take every step to ensure that no-one – whatever the status of their employment – is penalised for doing the right thing in protecting themselves, their families and their communities.

Like many others around this table, we have announced an unprecedented package of measures to protect people's jobs and incomes.

Firstly, we have introduced a COVID-19 Job Retention Scheme under which employers are eligible to apply for a government grant of 80% of a worker's salary up to £2,500 a month. Already, after 3 days of registration, over 2.8 million jobs have been saved.

While many UK companies already offer generous sick pay packages, to ensure

we have a safety net of support for those who have symptoms or have actually contracted the virus and are unable to work we have ensured that the UK's legal minimum Statutory Sick Pay provisions are now available from day one, providing workers who are unwell with continuous financial certainty.

For the self-employed, the UK has introduced a scheme for eligible workers to receive up to £2,500 per month for at least 3 months.

For those on low incomes, the UK has announced a package of temporary welfare measures worth over £6.5 billion.

We kept schools open for the children of those parents designated as key workers, including public sector workers and those supporting welfare and critical supply chains. Many online courses are being provided for free for people of all ages. We are extending our antigen testing to key workers or someone in their household who show symptoms.

It is vital that our occupational health and safety measures continue to protect those still working, whether that be our frontline health and care workers or the people keeping food supply going from field to fork. Our Health and Safety Executive Agencies are working closely with Public Health agencies on this on safe working practice guidance.

The UK will continue to support those who are most vulnerable. We must ensure that our measures continue to protect all workers in need, regardless of employment status, age or gender. We recognise that the impacts of the crisis are felt significantly by women, particularly as they make up a large percentage of frontline care workers and also continue to do the majority of unpaid care work. We retain our ambition of an economy where everyone has the opportunity to enter work and progress, while being supported by the welfare system in their time of need.

I am grateful for the opportunity to share the UK's actions and for the opportunity to learn from the approaches taken in your countries.

The UK strongly supports the statement we are making today. We are now in the midst of our critical period of response. We should also consider the longer term consequences and how together we can act for a sustainable and inclusive recovery of the global economy. I encourage close alignment and engagement with the other G20 tracks.

Minister, I thank your Presidency for your speed in action in setting up this meeting and I look forward to further debate today and in September.

Thank you.