

**Statement of the International Commission on Occupational Health to the
Special Session of the Executive Board on the implementation of resolution
WHA73.1 COVID-19 response, 5-6 October 2020**

The International Commission on Occupational Health, ICOH, is the largest global NGO in the field of occupational health. The COVID-19 pandemic continues to seriously affect workers' health and lead to detrimental economic impacts in all countries. According to the Italian Workmen's Compensation statistics, 19.4% of all SARS CoV-2 infection cases occurred at the workplace; this translates into 30% of the study population of working age (15-65 years). Several occupational activities expose workers to the SARS CoV-2 virus particularly in sectors with high rates of human to human contact. If infected, workers in some occupations may play an important role as vectors or spreaders of the infection.

Prevention and management of the pandemic needs effective actions also at work. Such measures demand competence in occupational health and a good knowledge on work, working environments and conditions of work. Occupational health services should be made available to all workers in all sectors of the economy, and for all types of workers - private and public, for formal and informal workers - as requested by the WHA and the UNGA resolutions (WHA Resolutions 49.12; 30.43 and 60.26 and the UNGA Resolution 74.2).

For the successful prevention and management of the COVID-19 pandemic at work, the ICOH proposes that the following be included in all pandemic-related policies:

- 1) Recognition of the SARS CoV-2 virus as an occupational hazard,
- 2) Paying special attention to the protection of COVID-19 high risk workers, such as health workers, social workers, police forces, emergency responders, cleaners, workers in call centres, and workers in small scale enterprises.
- 3) Guidelines for the protection of workers against the SARS CoV-2 virus at work, and good working practices in all workplaces and work environments,
- 4) Consideration of the special needs of numerous vulnerable groups of workers,
- 5) Working towards the wide recognition of work-related COVID-19 cases as occupational diseases.
- 6) Ensuring access to competent occupational health services for all working people, i.e. Universal Occupational Health Coverage, UOHC.