

MEDIA STATEMENT ON COVID-19

BUSINESS COLLABORATES TO REDUCE COVID-19 RISK AND ECONOMIC IMPACT

Johannesburg, 22 March 2020: The business sector today had a fruitful discussion with the President as part of a multi-stakeholder engagement on Covid-19.

Business has rapidly mobilised to combine its resources in the service of South Africa and its people, to limit the economic, social and health impact of Covid-19 on the country.

Business Unity South Africa (BUSA), along with the Black Business Council (BBC) and other companies and business associations, has established a Project Management Office, to ensure collaboration with government and to use the available business resources and capacity to support public sector initiatives.

In a unique collaboration across public and private sectors, this will see business being aligned with government in putting the needs of South Africa first.

Task teams have been set up to proactively assess and implement business initiatives to deal with the impact of Covid-19 in health, the labour market and the broader economy, all three of which will be assisted by a communications task team.

The **health workstream** is focused on mobilising resources to contribute to Covid-19 tracing, tracking, testing, monitoring and pathology labs; communicating around Covid-19; hospital responses and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE), medicines and medical devices; and support the National Health Department with capabilities to enable more specific demographic resource deployment.

The **economic workstream** will, inter alia, identify critical sectors in the national response; help develop policy and industry specific interventions, including tax and loan relief; ensure security of critical supplies and energy; model the economic impact of Covid-19 and combat predatory pricing, rent seeking and panic buying. To tackle the impact of the necessary quarantines and lockdowns and the subsequent substantial decline in consumer activity, other areas the team is working on, include:

- Mitigating the risks of inconsistent electricity supply and other infrastructural constraints;
- Assessing the impact on technology, media and telecommunications services and networks, given the urgency for remote working;
- Mitigating the risks from the public transport system and identifying alternative mass commuter services; and
- Identifying necessary import substitution requirements and optimising local manufacturing accordingly.

The **labour workstream** will look at the impact of Covid-19 on employers and employees; developing advice on issues such as short working hours, Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) claims and special leave. It will identify and address blockages such as seeking adjustments to the Disaster Management Regulations and other aspects of the regulatory framework. It will also be encouraging good practise to preserve and support employees; environment and workplace hygiene, and collaboration with regulators especially in high risk sectors.

Business unreservedly supports the Presidency and the recently established National Command Council. It is working closely with the national departments of health, employment and labour, and trade and industry, as well as in the National Economic Development and Labour Council (Nedlac).

BUSA's vice president, Martin Kingston, said: "Desperate times demand desperate measures. We have embarked on this major collaboration – among South African businesses and with government – to share best practice, reduce risk wherever possible, and implement practical measures to ease the hardships caused by this global catastrophe. We will see through this pandemic by preparing effectively, adapting where necessary and acting decisively."

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For further information, please refer to:

<https://coronavirus.datafree.co/>

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