



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA

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**MINISTRY OF LABOUR, INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS AND EMPLOYMENT CREATION**

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**MEDIA RELEASE**

For **Immediate Release**; 26 March 2020 - Windhoek

**LABOUR AND EMPLOYMENT SECTOR VOICE ON COVID-19 AT WORKPLACE**

Following the Declaration of the State of Emergency by His Excellency the President Dr. Hage Geingob regarding the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic, the Executive Director in the Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation held a Tripartite Meeting on 24 and 25 March 2020 with the Social Partners (Employers and Workers' Representatives). The Meeting aimed at finding ways to maintain harmonious labour relations, ensure job security and business sustainability in the Labour and Employment Sector, particularly during this critical period.

The social partners reached consensus that employees should not lose their jobs due to the COVID-19 State of Emergency and Lockdown. The Sector has learnt with concern that some employers are opting for retrenchment, while others are forcing their employees to resign or take unpaid leave. The Tripartite Constituents are therefore urging employers to explore better ways that will enable them to keep their employees during this trying time. In an event that employers in consultation with trade unions decide to temporarily send their employees home (not retrenchment) as part of the precautionary measures to avoid infections, such employers are urged to recall their employees back after the State of Emergency and Lockdown period.

Employers across all sectors are urged to ensure that all employees are fully remunerated for March and April 2020. Should the situation persist, further arrangements will be put in place through genuine consultations if the situation does not stabilize by then.

It has also been noted that there are some employers who are forcing their employees to take annual leave or/and be on unpaid leave. This practice should be avoided at all cost and if any kind of leave is to be taken, it should be mutually agreed. Forced unpaid leave is illegal and hence unacceptable.

Recently, the Ministry announced precautionary measures to be familiar at workplace. All employers and employees are once again reminded to ensure maximum compliance with the precautionary measures at the workplace as set out by this Ministry as well as those of the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the World Health Organisation (WHO) in order to help to combat COVID-19.

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