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**SOUTH AFRICAN UNITED
BUSINESS CONFEDERATION**
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MEDIA STATEMENT
For immediate release
Tuesday, 24 March 2020

**SOUTH AFRICAN UNITED BUSINESS CONFEDERATION (SAUBC)
STATEMENT ON PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA IMMEDIATE REMEDIAL
MEASURES TO COMBAT CORONAVIRUS COVID-19 PANDEMIC.**

Monday, 23 March 2020, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Mr. Cyril Ramaphosa announced further deepening measures to combat COVID-19 Epidemic in South Africa. SAUBC welcomes the Presidents statement on escalating and putting in place urgent remedial actions to fight Coronavirus COVID-19 epidemic with the rapid increase of cases in our country.

“SAUBC supports the President’s announcement on the national lockdown effective from Thursday, 26 March 2020 midnight till the 16th April 2020. As a country, it is concerning that a rapid increase in infections will continue and more cases will triple if no immediate action was taken to break the transmission of the virus, George Sebelela, President of SAUBC”.

The past week, as government have been implementing these measures, the global crisis has escalated. “President Ramaphosa addressed the nation last Sunday, at the time, there were over 160,000 confirmed COVID-19 cases worldwide. Today, there are over 340,000 confirmed cases across the world. In South Africa alone, the number of confirmed cases has accelerated in just nine days from 61 cases to 554 cases, 2 in ICU and 0 deaths and it is only a matter of time that the virus will spread to our rural communities,” Sebelela added.

SAUBC is aware of the National Coronavirus Command Council that has been put in place and has decided to enforce a nation-wide lockdown for 21 days with effect from midnight on Thursday 26 March. This was a decisive measure to save millions of South Africans from infection and save the lives of hundreds of the citizens and for that, our members laud the council for that.

The categories of people who will be excused from this lockdown are the following: health workers in the public and private sectors, emergency personnel, those in security services such as the police, traffic officers, military medical personnel, soldiers and other persons necessary for our response to the pandemic.

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It will also include those involved in the production, distribution and supply of food and basic goods, essential banking services, the maintenance of power, water and telecommunications services, laboratory services, and the provision of medical and hygiene products. A full list of essential personnel will be published.

Individuals will not be allowed to leave their homes except under strictly controlled circumstances, such as to seek medical care, buy food, medicine and other supplies or collect a social grant.

Temporary shelters that meet the necessary hygiene standards will be identified for homeless people. Sites are also being identified for quarantine and self-isolation for people who cannot self-isolate at home.

All shops and businesses will be closed, except for pharmacies, laboratories, banks, essential financial and payment services, including the JSE, supermarkets, petrol stations and health care providers. Including companies that are essential to the production and transportation of food, basic goods and medical supplies will remain open

As a federation representing export councils, industry sectors and business chambers, we cannot ignore the fact that business will be highly affected and impact greatly on people's livelihoods, on the life of our society and on our economy.

We are positive that the set of interventions noted will assist to bolster society from these economic difficulties such as the following;

Firstly:

Solidarity Fund, which South African businesses, organisations and individuals, and members of the international community, can contribute to.

The Fund will focus efforts to combat the spread of the virus, help us to track the spread, care for those who are ill and support those whose lives are disrupted. The Fund will also complement what we are doing in the public sector. The fund will be chaired by Ms Gloria Serobe and the deputy Chairperson is Mr Adrian Enthoven.

We are also aware that the fund has a website – www.solidarityfund.co.za – and you can begin to deposit monies into the account tonight. The Fund will be administered by a reputable team of people, drawn from financial institutions, accounting firms and government. It will fully account for every cent contributed and will publish the details on the website. It will have a board of eminent South Africans to ensure proper governance.

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Government has vouched and will provide seed capital of R150 million and the private sector has already pledged to support this fund with financial contributions in the coming period.

“As patriotic South Africans, we should not be shy and not give a standing ovation for the commitment made in this time of crisis by the Rupert and Oppenheimer families of R1 billion each to assist small businesses and their employees affected by the coronavirus pandemic. “ Sebulela added.

Secondly:

Government is in consultation on a proposal for a special dispensation for companies that are in distress because of COVID-19. Through this proposal employees will receive wage payment through the Temporary Employee Relief Scheme, which will enable companies to pay employees directly during this period and avoid retrenchment.

- Any employee who falls ill through exposure at their workplace will be paid through the Compensation Fund.
- Commercial banks have been exempted from provisions of the Competition Act to enable them to develop common approaches to debt relief and other necessary measures.

Government has also put it to us that they have met with all the major banks and expect that most banks will put measures in place within the next few days.

- Many large companies that are currently closed have accepted their responsibility to pay workers affected. Government calls on larger businesses in particular to take care of their workers during this period.
- In the event that it becomes necessary, they will utilise the reserves within the UIF system to extend support to those workers in SMEs and other vulnerable firms who are faced with loss of income and whose companies are unable to provide support. Details of these will be made available within the next few days.



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Thirdly, government will assist businesses that may be in distress.

- Using the tax system, they will provide a tax subsidy of up to R500 per month for the next four months for those private sector employees earning below R6,500 under the Employment Tax Incentive. This will help over 4 million workers.

- The South African Revenue Service will also work towards accelerating the payment of employment tax incentive reimbursements from twice a year to monthly to get cash into the hands of compliant employers as soon as possible.

- Tax compliant businesses with a turnover of less than R50 million will be allowed to delay 20% of their pay-as-you-earn liabilities over the next four months and a portion of their provisional corporate income tax payments without penalties or interest over the next six months. This intervention is expected to assist over 75 000 small and medium-term enterprises.

- Government is exploring the temporary reduction of employer and employee contributions to the Unemployment Insurance Fund and employer contributions to the Skill Development Fund.

- The Department of Small Business Development has made over R500 million available immediately to assist small and medium enterprises that are in distress through a simplified application process.

- The Industrial Development Corporation has put a package together with the Department of Trade, Industry and Competition of more than R3 billion for industrial funding to address the situation of vulnerable firms and to fast-track financing for companies critical to our efforts to fight the virus and its economic impact.

- The Department of Tourism made an additional R200 million available to assist SMEs in the tourism and hospitality sector who are under particular stress due to the new travel restrictions.

George Sebelela reiterated “we call upon all South Africans to help government and act in the interest of all South African citizens and not in their own selfish interests to benefit from this tragic global crisis. We ask all business leaders to put heads together and come forward in the spirit of **Thuma Mina**. We also plead with our people not to panic or panic buy as this will put more strain on the manufacturing and agriculture sectors. We intensely support government to act very strongly against any attempts and all forms of corruption and profiteering from this crunch”.

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Moreover, we also urge all our members (Export councils, Business Chambers, Industry associations) strategic partners to ensure that the President's measures continue to be executed, continue the increase awareness of hygiene, to play their part and assist government, strategic stakeholders who have volunteered to assist contain and share factual information about the virus. SAUBC will assist government and ensure frequent dissemination of updated information about COVID-19 on all SAUBC platforms.

In conclusion, "SAUBC would like to thank all health workers, our doctors, nurses and paramedics who are on the war zone of the pandemic, our teachers, border officials, police and traffic officers and all the other people who have been leading our response." SAUBC President.

ENDS.

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What is COVID-19?

Is the disease caused by a "novel coronavirus" which originated in Wuhan, China.

Symptoms of coronavirus

- Runny nose
- Headache
- Cough
- Sore throat
- Fever
- Malaise
- Otitis media (more common in children)

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Prevention

There are no vaccines available yet against human coronavirus infection. Prevention, therefore, comes down to personal care to reduce the risk of contagion, including:

- Avoid traveling to areas where outbreaks are occurring.
- Wash your hands frequently with soap and water for at least 20 seconds.
- Avoid touching the eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people with respiratory symptoms.

What is SAUBC?

South Africa United Business Confederation (SAUBC) is a non-profit & non-racial, business & economic federation that represents cross-cutting business interests in South Africa. SAUBC consists of members representing Export Councils, Industry Associations and Joint Groups (Business Chambers).

SAUBC Goal

The goal of SAUBC as a comprehensive **BUSINESS & ECONOMIC FEDERATION**, is to **CONTRIBUTE TO THE SELF-SUSTAINED DEVELOPMENT OF THE SOUTH AFRICAN ECONOMY** and the **IMPROVEMENT OF THE LIVES OF CITIZENS**, by drawing out the dynamism, capacity & experience of Export Councils, Industry Associations, Joint Action Groups & Corporations as well as interact with Government, Labour & Communities that support them.

SAUBC Vision

To make South Africa the best and preferred investment destination.

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