

ITF DEMANDS SAFE AIRPORTS FOR WORKERS AND PASSENGERS

The COVID-19 pandemic has exaggerated, not created the issues airport workers are facing today, such as the fragmentation of the industry, subcontracting and outsourcing of labour to precarious workers. As a result of this crisis, many workers have lost their livelihoods with no recompense for being laid-off, regardless of how long they have served the airport.

The existing business and employment models in airports are no longer fit for purpose, neither for workers nor for passengers.

Subcontracting hinders the necessary implementation and evaluation of **health and safety measures** at the scale needed during and coming out of this crisis. Before getting onto an aircraft, passengers will continue to pass through airports with several points of human contact, from check-in to security and boarding. Both workers and passengers need assurance that adequate safety precautions are being taken by all service providers including subcontractors.

Rebuilding **passenger and market confidence** and trust requires a global, coordinated health and safety strategy for dealing with COVID-19 at airports, including standardised measures and sufficient resources for enforcement. Workers and their unions are the most effective means for monitoring and enforcing health and safety standards. Therefore, key efforts must be made to introduce a standardized and **tripartite airport-wide health and safety regime**.

Aviation and airports have to be recognized as a **fundamental public good** for economic development, trade, mobility and society. This requires strong government regulation and oversight, planning, investment, and, where appropriate, public ownership. Partly or, in some cases, fully reversing the involvement of the private sector in airport managing and financing could give governments back control over their ultimate responsibility for safety and security in aviation.

Airports link regional, national and international markets and are crucial for **economic development**. The COVID-19 pandemic is expected to have more serious consequences for the financial situation of smaller airports. Economic damage to smaller airports will inevitably damage remote and vulnerable communities, which rely on such airports for not only economic development, but also essential services such as air ambulance and access. Any investment required to protect them and their future as important regional hubs needs to be conditioned to securing good jobs and stability for workers.

Government leadership, built on close cooperation with employers and trade unions, is the only solution to this challenge. The ITF calls upon **governments, airport authorities** and **employers** to negotiate with trade unions to:



Guarantee the health and safety of airport workers and passengers

1. Recognise **employers' ultimate responsibility** for the health, safety and welfare of **all workers** in their operations and supply chains, and recognise COVID-19 as an **occupational disease**;
2. Guarantee the provision of appropriate and gender-responsive **personal protective equipment (PPE) for workers and passengers**, to ensure workers are adequately protected from infection, particularly those in public-facing roles; make wearing **face masks** compulsory for anyone entering airports;
3. Provide **access to free healthcare and medical testing**, treatment, training, equipment and facilities for training **for all workers**;
4. Guarantee **paid leave**, in the form of **sick pay** or holiday pay, from the first day of leave, for any workers threatened or infected by COVID-19 and for workers with care obligations;

Safeguard workers' rights to safeguard passenger safety

5. Enforce **ILO Conventions** regarding freedom of association, collective bargaining, forced labour, discrimination, and occupational health and safety for all workers; **protect trade union rights** and be responsive to the issues of gender, migration status and LGBT+ workers;
6. **Identify threats** and new pressures to workers' health, rights and welfare, and develop and implement workplace responses, including standardised **social distancing protocols**;
7. Ensure there are adequate and safe means for workers to report **workplace risks and risks to workers' health and safety** without the threat of sanctions or dismissals;
8. Respect the **right to withdraw** from a work situation that presents an imminent and serious danger to their or their immediate family's life or health, without fear of retaliation;

Protect pay, conditions and jobs

9. **End precarious and non-standard forms of work** in airports and supply chains to protect the health, safety and welfare of workers and passengers, and agree a **moratorium on all lay-offs**;
10. **Improve scheduling**, days of work and working hours to protect jobs and the health and safety of workers and reflect care obligations;
11. **Assess existing working practices** in dialogue with unions and amend these where necessary to minimize workers' exposure to passengers;
12. Recognise and compensate the **key role of airport workers** through line of duty and enhanced compensation and benefits, including access to compensation in the case of injury or death;

Build economic and financial sustainability

13. Maintain the operational status of airports during the crisis to **ensure a safe and efficient recovery of the industry** when the opportunity presents itself;
14. Recognise the **key role of airports** as an **economic and public good**, particularly in small and remote communities, which rely on airports for their economic and social development.
15. Reduce **subcontracting** and outsourcing of airport services and jobs and, where appropriate, mandate airport authorities to directly manage and/or employ all airport staff;
16. Include unions in consultation on all **new technological developments** arising from COVID-19 and ensure a just transition with equal access and opportunity for women;
17. Guarantee **sustainability of public financial relief and support** for airport employers;

Cooperate to ensure leadership and responsibility

18. Establish airport-wide, tripartite, **health and safety committees** with women and young worker representation to ensure health and safety standards and measures are understood by workers, monitored, enforced and evaluated;
19. Work with ICAO to agree **global, coordinated health and safety standards and strategies** for airports and aviation, in cooperation with airport-wide tripartite health and safety committees, airlines and trade unions.

These measures must apply to airport workers regardless of their job description, contractual arrangement and employment status and be responsive to different genders and migration statuses.

Government and employers should also engage with the ITF and trade unions through the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) as the appropriate forum to coordinate an international response to the crisis and prepare the industry for the recovery of the global economy.

