

Template Letter

COVID-19 underscores that its time to Ratify Convention 190

Dear Minister,

The risk of violence and harassment is even higher during times of crisis: the COVID-19 outbreak has been a sombre reminder of this. Covid-19 has led to an increase in domestic violence and attacks on frontline workers, particularly care, transport workers, cleaners and supermarket employees, many of whom are women. This is why our union _____ representing _____workers is calling on you to support the ratification by _____your country of ILO Convention 190.

Adopted by the International Labour Conference in June 2019, Convention No. 190 is a landmark instrument. It is the first international labour standard to address violence and harassment in the world of work. Together with Recommendation No. 206, it provides a common framework for action and a unique opportunity to shape a future of work based on dignity and respect. The Convention affirms that everyone has the right to a world of work free from violence and harassment. It includes the first international definition of violence and harassment in the world of work, including gender-based violence.

The Convention recognises that violence and harassment in the world of work “can constitute a human rights violation or abuse...is a threat to equal opportunities, is unacceptable and incompatible with decent work.” It defines “violence and harassment” as behaviours, practices or threats “that aim at, result in, or are likely to result in physical, psychological, sexual or economic harm.”

Covid-19 has not killed sexual harassment instead it has moved online. Surveillance techniques used by employers to monitor the workforce has given sexual harassers new tools with which to threaten, intimidate and abuse women workers. Staying at home isn't safe for workers who are under threat of domestic violence. The impact of measures adopted to fight the spread of coronavirus is impacting on finances and this can leave women vulnerable to economic abuse.

Member States have a responsibility now more than ever to protect workers from all forms of harassment and violence.