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BUSINESS UNITY SA (BUSAS) APPOINTS CAS COOVADIA AS A NEW CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER

Business Unity South Africa announced Cas Coovadia as the new Chief Executive Officer of the organization on the 5th of April 2020. Cas has been serving as acting CEO since the stepping down of Tanya Cohen in July 2019.

Cas retired as Managing Director of The Banking Association SA (BASA) after spending 15 years there. He was instrumental in positioning BASA as one of the leading business organisations in SA and positioning it as a credible voice for the banking industry.

Cas is still active in numerous business organisations and in civic life. He is the Chairperson of the National Business Initiative, on the Council of Wits University, on the board of the Centre for Development and Enterprise, amongst others.

The President of BUSA, Siphon Pityana, said: "Cas comes to BUSA as its CEO after serving many years as an anti-apartheid activist and then representing broader SA business. He brings a wealth of organisational and strategic experience and skills, which are critical for business and the country. Our country faces enormous challenges of pedestrian economic growth, lack of investment and a significant fiscal deficit.

These are exacerbated by the Moody's downgrade of SA into sub-investment grade status, and by the recent Fitch downgrade. Cas also joins BUSA at a time the country is focused on fighting the social, health and economic damage caused by Covid-19. The BUSA Board thanks Cas for delaying his well-earned retirement to continue to contribute to the growth and development of our country."

Cas started as CEO of BUSA on 1 April 2020.

We would like to wish Cas Coovadia well in his role as the new head of the apex business organisation in South Africa

📍BUSASite: <https://.org.busaza/>; Twitter, @BusinessUnitySA; and Facebook, @BusinessUnitySouthAfrica

BUSA President Sipho Pityana Having each other's backs is the only way through the storm

Sipho Pityana "said" President Cyril Ramaphosa and key members of his Cabinet – in particular, Health Minister Zweli Mkhize – have shown world-class leadership in driving government's response to the virus. They have been truly exemplary, and we are indebted to them for their swift and decisive response.

Alongside this, civil society with desperately limited resources, has risen to the occasion and is marshalling and mobilising in whatever way possible - supporting government's campaigns through public education, health care, volunteerism, and other means.

Ordinary people, too, are embarking on programmes to provide food and shelter to the poor, to lend a hand wherever they can, and to rebuild good neighbourliness

Labour has stepped up, playing a crucial role in keeping workers informed of their rights and responsibilities and showing real maturity in finding solutions to the economic impact of the national lockdown.

Business, too, has united under the banner "Business for South Africa" (B4SA) and come up with a basket of interventions – in banking, healthcare and other sectors – to try to keep the economy together and minimise the impact that Covid-19 (and the Moody's downgrade) will have on all of us, but particularly the most vulnerable.

Our solidarity within business has never been stronger and our synergy with government has never been tighter. BUSA, BLSA, BASA, SACCI, the Black Business Council and other business associations are the brains behind BSA and have established a project management office to ensure collaboration with government and to use the available business resources and capacity to support each other, public sector initiatives and collaborate with other social partners in labour and civil society. This collaboration across the public and private sectors will see business being aligned with government to put 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 of which will be assisted by a communications team.

Members of BUSA, and business in general, have been encouraged to speed up payments to SMEs, and to provide tax relief and fiscal support, and rethink their supply chains to provide a lifeline to small businesses.

Banks have changed some of their policies to ease the financial pressure on customers. Mines have opened up health care facilities to local communities. The health care industry is broadening its cover.

Retailers have issued directives restricting the purchase quantities of in-demand items to curtail panic buying. We have come out very strongly against unscrupulous profiteering and will continue to do so.

What is becoming obvious as we adapt to Covid-19 and the national lockdown is that social compacting - working together, making compromises where necessary, finding common ground - is the only thing that can save us.

One thing is for sure: we will need the same determination and calibre of leadership to rescue the economy that we have seen so far during Covid-19. And we will need it for a very, very long time.

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EconPol

BUSA standing committee Economic Policy virtual meeting scheduled to take place on **21 April 2020** took place chaired by Martin Kingston the Chair opened the meeting and welcomed those present at the end of the meeting he indicated that the next sub-committee was scheduled for 18 June 2020 (10:00 – 13:00).

1. Overview of “Business for South Africa” (B4SA) and the COVID-19 response

BUSA, BBC and other business organisations developed Business for South Africa which is aimed at working with government to combat the spread of Covid-19 and come up with several economic interventions during and post-Covid-19 pandemic.

B4SA is not a legal entity, therefore, people who are working for it are working on a pro-bono basis (paid by their individual organisations).

B4SA has more than 450 people working on a pro-bono basis.

B4SA had developed several workstreams and working groups in response to Covid-19 pandemic. These work streams will be discussed further below, and the contact details of the respective lead persons would be shared upon request.

In response to COVID-19, the government together with the private sector (B4SA) has established a Solidarity Fund to stabilise the economy.

Businesses that are financially viable are encouraged to donate funds to the Solidarity Fund in order to ensure that the economy will continue functioning post-COVID-19.

To coordinate the work of B4SA, a Project Management Team has been established with about 45 people working as PMOs. Health and Economic Models have been developed.

Due to the implications of COVID-19, the economy is expected to experience a GDP contraction of 6%-8% resulting in more 3 million people losing their jobs with 1 million people in the formal sector and about 2 million in the informal sector.

2. B4SA Health Working Group – Led by Stavros Nicolaou

The work of the B4SA Health Working Group compliments and supplements the work of the National Health Department, given its resources and capacity constraints.

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The working group has established nine (9) workstreams with specific goals and objectives and led by specialists in their respective fields.

The following are the nine (9) workstreams of the B4SA Health Working Group:

1. Primary Care Practitioners:
2. COVID testing and path labs
3. Data analytics and dashboards
4. Emergency medicines/ donation interface
5. Hospital and medical human capital
6. Community and corporate pharmacy
7. Communication
8. Medical equipment (inc. PPE, ventilation) and
9. Pharmaceutical and Vaccines.

The Health working Group has assisted the National Health Department with amongst others, testing strategy in terms of evaluation and accreditation of tests kits; dashboard visibility with respect to COVID-19 predictive modelling and international scenario modelling, screening and testing; medicine security and flexible medicine procurement and supply; hospital and physician/s capacity and resourcing; assisting with the trace & tack initiative, daily updates to business and social influences production; tracking and accounting of donated items and manage the procurement and distribution of donated items.

3. B4SA Labour Market Working Group – Led by Robert Legh

The B4SA Labour Market Working Group's main purpose is to clarify the regulations for employers, provide guidance on ad-hoc queries and provide a legal opinion during and post COVID-19 pandemic on all the labour market-related issues.

The following are the five (5) workstreams of the B4SA Labour Market Working Group:

1. Legal Workstream
2. Nedlac / Organised Labour Workstream
3. Communication Workstream
4. Essential Industries Workstream and
5. Industry Inputs Workstream.

The B4SA Labour Market Working Group has made great progress in terms of helping the Department of Employment and Labour to pay Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) claims to various companies. To date about **R1 billion** in UIF claims have been paid.

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The working group together with the Department of Employment and Labour was currently working on the regulations to help companies and employees to return back to work with specific requirements or conditions (to be shared with members once finalised) and a protective measure to protect employees not to lose their jobs during and post COVID-19 pandemic.

4. B4SA Economic Intervention Group – Led by Martin Kingston

The following are the workstreams for the B4SA Economic Intervention Group:

1. Communications Workstream
2. Macroeconomic Strategy
3. Essential Business Sectors
4. Industrial Policy and Local Manufacturing
5. Supply Chain Security
6. Security for Critical Infrastructure
7. Safe Transport
8. Security of Consumer Supplies
9. Small Medium Enterprises and Township Economy

The B4SA Economic Intervention Group has made significant progress in terms of working with government to:

- Release the spectrum required by the telecommunication industry to ensure network stability, performance, and remote working impacts
- Facilitating continued engagement between both private and public sector stakeholders
- Identifying the essential business sectors / services
- Working with government to develop a comprehensive policy reaction following the impact Covid-19 in various sectors (to be shared once finalised) looking at fiscal support and monetary policy
- Ensuring and encouraging processing of payments to SMME's in time
- Expediting inputs required for Phase 2 - stabilisation post the lockdown in order to rapidly respond to the economic crisis
- Completion of a first view including, modelling and interventions of economic impacts - engaging with National Treasury, The Presidency and DTIC
- Ensure sufficient and stability of resource support
- Deal with panic buying, rent seeking companies and product pricing
- Develop the stimulus package for the economy and other economic intervention measures.

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5. BUSA's role in B4SA and interfaces for BUSA members

B4SA is not a representative structure / body, it was formed to deal with all the business issues which were raised by both BUSA members and non-BUSA members.

BUSA's role in B4SA is to provide leadership and direction, and continues to identify critical work to be done by B4SA and members interested in participating in various B4SA are encouraged to participate on a pro-bono basis.

BUSA daily shares a communique on the status update and progress made by B4SA in terms of curbing the spread of Covid-19 with members and members are encouraged to forward this communique with their members.

BUSA encourages its members to forward all the questions and concerns pertaining to Covid-19 from their respective sectors.

6. Questions and Answers

The following questions will be directed to the respective B4SA Working Groups and Workstreams:

6.1.1. Can the SETA funding or grants and Skills Development Levy (SDL) be redirected to the Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) for the next three (3) months in order to keep other sectors afloat?

6.1.2. With regard to the Labour activity that has taken place in terms of retrenchments, no work no pay, or part payment of employers then recovering from TERS, will there be any investigation into the actions of employers, or is government accepting that every action taken is legitimate and ethical?

Answer for 6.1. & 6.2: The Government is currently looking at a range of alleviation measures for employers and measures to protect employees from unfair practices by employers. These measures will be communicated by government once they had been completed.

6.2. Most full-time clothing retail workers are paid for doing nothing, is there away to make them work overtime without pay (overtime payment) in order to compensate for being paid for work done?

Answer: This is based on the employment contractual agreement between the employer and employee. The employment contract can only be changed if the employee agrees to the proposed changed.

6.3.1. Can BUSA provide members with clarity on the three scenarios especially the second scenario?

6.3.2. Effectively what happens effective 1 May? There was a reference made to the 'easing' of the economy - especially for essential sectors, can you elaborate?

Answer for 6.3.1 & 6.3.2: The scenarios refer to the speed to which Lockdown restrictions will be lifted and the impact thereof to the economy. Scenario 2 means that the Lockdown restrictions will be lifted progressively meaning that considerable part of the economy will continue to be on lockdown. These questions to be further escalated to the relevant B4SA working group.

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6.4. What is the role played by B4SA on the manufacturing and pricing of hand sanitizers?

Answer: There is a Subcommittee related to Sanitizers, members encouraged to contact Patricia Pillay for more information and if they want to be included in the Sanitizers Subcommittee - patriciap@cgcsa.co.za 082 564 1092

6.5.1. What are the specific health conditions for returning to work?

6.5.2. Workplace protocols for essential workers as well as return to work, when is the draft going to be shared?

Answer for 6.4.1. & 6.4.2.: There has been a draft manual being developed by the Department of Health stipulating specific health conditions. The final draft will be shared with members.

6.6. What will happen to several legislations scheduled to be passed and implemented this year.

Answer: Martin Kingston undertook to discuss this with relevant workstream leads.

6.7. Relaxation of BEA and LRA? Relaxation of Bargaining Council, Minimum Wages - NOT National Min Wage? Moving Skills Funds to UIF or Labour Support? Large business to help UIF processing for affected workers of interest? Pension/Provident Fund Payment Holidays?

Answer: The BUSA Sub-Committee on Education and Training is working on a proposal to the DHET regarding the Skills Development Levy and extension of the WSP submissions. BUSA to circulate the document once finalised to relevant BUSA structures for members' input. This question will further be referred to the B4SA Labour Market Working Group

6.8. What is the format and way in which members are to make a presentation and whether it is preferred to speak to the individuals steering the particular workstreams in so far as it relates to post lockdown and the protocols to be adapted for our sectors of beauty and hairdressing specifically.

Answer: Contact details of the relevant workstream leads are available upon request.

6.9. If cashflow is the biggest problem facing businesses, what is the possibility of having delayed payment of tax liability to SARS for two or 3 months? This specifically relates to excise taxes which are paid at source, that is before the product is sold.

Answer: There has been Disaster Management Tax Relief Measures proposed by the National Treasury and would be announced soon.

BUSA standing committee on Economic Policy continues

6.10. Can there be more emphasis to press for activation of the R200bn MTEF commitment that was made in the Budget Speech? Increased public sector infrastructure spending is a proven economic recovery model for countries coming out of periods of crisis, with significant long-term economic benefits. It is more important than ever to see this through and tap into construction's potential to create employment opportunities in the immediate aftermath of the lockdown.

Answer: Contact details of the relevant workstream leads are available upon request, to enable direct engagement.

6.11. In terms of the directive linked to the call centres operating as essential services. Companies need to report on all call centres on a weekly basis to the Minister of Health and DTIC. There are many businesses who are not aware of this, is it possible for BUSA to share communication related to this?

Answer: BUSA to share the communication with members on the details pertaining to the Call Centre Services.

Q.6.12. What process will be followed in identifying sectors / sub-sectors to start operating again and will the leadership of these sectors be consulted for input?

Answer: The relevant workstream lead is Tanya Cohen, whose contact details are available from the BUSA secretariat.

7. Actions by BUSA and its Members

7.1. Continuously share the work done by B4SA with Econpol and Socpol

7.2. Members to share the work done by B4SA with their members

7.3. Members interested in participating in B4SA working groups and workstreams to contact the working group leads or BUSA

7.4. Send members questions to the relevant B4SA working group

7.5. Members encouraged to pay employee salaries in full and in time

7.6. Members encouraged to source or buy locally where possible

7.7. Members encouraged to pay SMME suppliers in time

7.10. Members with good balance sheets encouraged to make contributions toward the Solidarity Fund

7.11. Members encouraged to support local communities with food parcels, etc.

7.12. Members with the capacity and skills encouraged to participate in the B4SA working groups and workstreams on a pro-bono basis.

7.1.3. BUSA to share the contact details of the Lead persons for the various B4SA Working Groups and Workstreams upon request.

■ The End!

■ CONTACTS

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