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Sakumono, Accra

## PRESS STATEMENT:

### “CSOs CALL FOR EXTENSIVE MEASURES TO PROTECT THE POOR AND VULNERABLE IN THE WAKE OF COVID 19”

We, comprising over 400 civil society organisations including networks, coalitions and associations, with presence across the country, mobilised under the Ghana Civil Society Organisations Platform (CSOs) on Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) and other CSOs operating at the national, regional and in 275 districts of Ghana, note that the corona virus pandemic (COVID-19) has reached epic proportions globally, affecting many lives and markets. Efforts to keep the coronavirus at bay by governments have been many and varied, with African governments facing stark health and economic choices.

Ghana, on March 12, 2020 joined several African countries that have recorded incidences of the corona virus pandemic and it is important and commendable to acknowledge the responsive leadership of the Government of Ghana in these “not so ordinary” times. Ghanaian civil society commend and are supportive of the measures Government is taking in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic. We are equally concerned, as is Government, about the increase in the number of confirmed cases albeit mainly among persons currently under quarantine. Going by global trends, we see the partial lockdown of the Greater Kumasi Metropolitan Area (GKMA) and the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA) to be a step in the right direction. We are excited to hear of the establishment of the COVID-19 Fund to support the poor and the vulnerable as a way of cushioning them against the wrath of the pandemic.

As Government contemplates the next steps of these partial lockdown and as Ghanaians prepare for the potentially devastating impact of this pandemic on the development and economy of the nation, civil society organizations from across Ghana are appealing to Government to consider further, these specific measures that will protect the lives and livelihoods of the poorest and most vulnerable women, men and children in our society, including but not limited to:

**Permitting access for competent, qualified civil society organizations** to the most vulnerable communities to deliver potentially life-saving interventions to affected populations in the partial lockdown areas of GKMA and GAMA. the country. Properly trained and equipped civil society workers can support Government’s efforts on risk communication and community engagement (RCCE); water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH); nutrition; gender-based violence (GBV) prevention, response and support; protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA); psychosocial counselling and support; and livelihoods support, to name a

few. In addition to this, we would request that **Humanitarian Workers are considered as essential workers within the period of the lockdown.**

**Putting in place a multi-stakeholder board to manage the COVID 19 Fund:** The President has announced the establishment of an Independent Board of Trustees to be chaired by the former Chief Justice Sophia Akuffo. Such a Committee should include representatives from civil society organisations and the private sector.

**Controlled market policy and enforcement:** Enforcing strict price controls on essential commodities and staple foods to prevent the unscrupulous practices of price gouging we saw in some local markets these past few weeks.

**Subsidized social services:** Subsidizing essential basic and social services by freezing or reducing tariffs on access to water, electricity, and communication for all citizens.

**Transparency and Accountability in All COVID 19 Related Expenditures:** Ensure that all expenditures are applied in a responsible, transparent and accountable manner to ensure respective intervention(s) reach the targeted beneficiaries. This is very critical since government did not begin its financial year with a budget line for COVID-19, as such every inflow and expenditure towards the crisis must be duly accounted for in a transparent manner.

The civil society community under the leadership of the Ghana CSOs Platform on SDGs, other CSOs networks and individual organisations, recognize that this effort to deploy strategies and resources for a strengthened course of action is not only the responsibility of the government. CSO have a complementary role to play, especially at the community levels.

We recognize that the coronavirus is not only a threat to health care but also to governance, and therefore call for a multi-faceted approach to supporting government in its approach to curb the pandemic. While health resources and technical capacity to fight the virus is central, engaging the communities and the individual households in taking on the challenge will also be critical. This is where Civil Society groups working through the National CSOs Platform have a comparative advantage to sensitize communities and support with some services for the poor and vulnerable. We have already begun some initiatives in this regard and wish to state that our members are open and available to support the work of government in hard to reach communities and to identify hard to reach social groups to slow the spread and deliver a healthy nation.

As CSOs operating in Ghana, we are happy to announce the establishment of a CSOs COVID 19 Response Committee to manage the CSOs COVID 19 Fund. The Fund is currently mobilizing donations in cash and kind from CSOs and individual philanthropists. This Fund will complement government's efforts by supporting poor and vulnerable groups as well as frontline health workers.

In conclusion, we appeal to Government to establish and convene a multi-stakeholder forum through which we can share information about our collective efforts to mobilize resources for the national response and coordinate our plans

and interventions to align with Government priorities and respond to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable among us.

We stand ready. With all hands-on deck, we can surmount the challenges that confront all of us.

**ISSUED BY THE GHANA CIVIL SOCIETY ORGANISATIONS PLATFORM ON SDGs FOR AND ON BEHALF OF ITS MEMBERS AND NON MEMBERS, IN ACCRA ON 30<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2020**

**For interviews and donations to the Fund, please contact the Co-Chair, Ghana CSOs Platform on SDGs:**

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