

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA, MP, MINISTER OF HEALTH AND
SOCIAL SERVICE ON EXPIRY OF STAGE 3 OF THE COVID-19 RESTRICTIONS
EXTENSION AND THE SPECIAL DISPENSATION FOR THE WINDHOEK,
OKAHANDJA AND REHOBOTH LOCAL AUTHORITY AREAS.**

11 SEPTEMBER 2020

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery*

Your Excellency, Dr. Hage G. Geingob, President of the Republic of Namibia,
Rt Hon Prime Minister
Hon Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International Relations and Cooperation,
Honourable Ministers,
Media Practitioners,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. On 28 August 2020, His Excellency, the President announced COVID-19 response measures that will lapse tomorrow, the 12 September 2020. We have just heard about the way forward in our national COVID-19 response for the period up to 17 September 2020, when the current State of Emergency will lapse. At that occasion of 28 August 2020, I shared with the nation some information on several aspects of our national COVID-19 response. These include, safe burials for Covid-9-related deaths, post-humous swabbing of human remains, autopsies, cremation, additional COVID-19 Sample Collection Points, COVID-19 vaccine, and COVID-19 Accountability Report.
2. Allow me, Your Excellency to reiterate the Government's position on some of these matters, once again. On the matter of safe burial, we as the Ministry and other stakeholders wish to express our appreciation for the positive response and co-operation of the bereaved families and the society at large with respect to the conduct of safe burials. Yes, there were and continues to be areas of concern with regard to this matter and we are working to ensure that these are ironed out in order to ensure that our departed citizens are afforded dignified burials, that the families have an opportunity to grieve their loved ones, accommodating their cultural and traditional practices, while at the same time ensuring that, the imperatives of public health are not compromised in any way. As His Excellency has stated on many occasions, the health of the Namibian nation is paramount. Furthermore, it is our sincere commitment to ensure that no funeral should give rise to more funerals.
3. On post-humous re-swabbing of human remains, we reiterate once again that, given the fact that COVID-19 is a notifiable infectious disease in terms of our law, the handling of human remains of those who succumb to it, or those remains that return positive results on the first post-humous swabbing, should be avoided. This is necessary for the protection of our frontline workers and the public at large. In the same context, we call on the families of the deceased to continue co-operating with Ministry officials on the matter of burials to avoid any delays so that the burials are carried out in compliance with the prescripts of public health imperatives, which the Ministry of Health and Social Services is obliged to enforce.
4. The Ministry will continue to provide psychosocial support and engage with families to foster a positive spirit prior to and during the burial process so that families may find closure in the aftermath of the passing away of their relatives.
5. I wish to announce that the Ministry of Health and Social Services and the City of Windhoek have successfully concluded negotiations, in terms of which the City will avail facilities to be utilized as additional COVID-19 Sample Collection Points. The

City will initially avail two points, namely, Katutura and Otjomuise Community Centres. There is also a consideration to avail more facilities in other parts of the City such as Tobias Hainyeko in Hakahana, Ombili Municipal Hall as well as sites Samora Machel and Moses Garoeb Constituencies. This will go a long way in improving our reach into the communities with these vital services. As such residents will no longer have to travel long distances to access these services. The Clinic at the Windhoek Central Correctional Facility has also been repurposed and is currently being utilized to collect COVID-19 specimen. Civil servants are encouraged to make use of this facility.

6. As far as COVID-19 testing capacity in the country is concerned, I wish to report that additional capacity has been added in the form of a repurposed laboratory at the Central Veterinary Laboratory. In a true spirit of effectively utilizing public resources, the CVL has provided its equipment, facilities and personnel to contribute to this important national effort. I am further pleased to inform that, the testing backlog for COVID-19 at NIP, which stood at more than 4000 two weeks ago, has been reduced to less 1,300. This means that we should be able to clear the backlog within the next few days. Thereafter, going forward, COVID-19 results will be released within a period of 24 hours. This is an important breakthrough in our response and preparedness.
7. With respect to the matters of quarantine and isolation, positive developments have been observed since the pivot of our policy measures to allow for home quarantine and home isolation, where conditions allow. This has provided relief to those who chose and were able to effectively quarantine and isolate safely at home. As a result, we have seen a significant reduction in the number of persons quarantined and isolated in commercial facilities such as hotels, guest houses and lodges. This is a positive development from the perspective of cost savings by Government.
8. As we are moving towards the end of the State of Emergency, the major responsibilities for COVID-19 prevention and control is progressively shifting from government to individuals, families and communities. It will be a sad day if the current gains of the past six months will be eroded by conducts that are not compatible with public health measures. As we will be on auto pilot mode, we must ensure that we stay the course.
9. I wish to echo our President's message that we must continue to hold hands, because only when we hold hands and pull together in the same direction, will we be able to defeat COVID-19.

I thank you.