

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 16TH COVID-19 MEDIA
BRIEFING ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSE MEASURES**

28 AUGUST 2020

WINDHOEK

***checked against delivery**

Fellow Namibians, Good Afternoon,

The rate of infection continues to accelerate and to date, Namibia has recorded 6,712 confirmed COVID-19 cases. It took 4 months to record the first thousand cases in the country, and 14 days to record 2,000 cases. It took 11 days to record 3,000 cases and 6 days to reach 4,000.

At the current rate, it is taking the country on average 3 days to record a thousand new cases.

In the wake of the COVID-19 pandemic, significant investments have gone into increasing our testing capacity, enabling us to test one-thousand-one-hundred-and-sixty (1,160) samples on average per day at local laboratories.

In the absence of a cure or vaccine, it becomes crucial that we enhance our ability to speedily identify infected citizens, especially those who are asymptomatic and pre-symptomatic, as they have the ability to spread the virus without showing any symptoms.

Our ability to diagnose the extent of the spread is essential to informing a tailored response.

For this reason we will continue to strengthen our national testing capacity.

At present, Namibia has the highest rate of new infections per population on the continent, and there are now confirmed cases in majority of the 34-health districts, with exception of Andara, Aranos and Nyangana.

This is of course attributable to the size of our population, testing coverage and transparency with public information. In terms of testing coverage, Namibia has tested 21 people per one thousand persons, as at 27 August 2020. This is among the highest testing coverage on the continent, surpassed only by South Africa and Rwanda.

As we review and adapt the national measures today, we are targeting efforts to respond strategically to the situation on the ground, and in the best manner to protect Namibian lives and livelihoods.

Through projections, simulation and modeling, we are also applying foresight to prepare for the coming weeks.

We are continuously monitoring the geographic spread of COVID-19 infections. Erongo region

accounts for three-thousand-three-hundred-and-seventy three (3,373) cases, or 50.3 percent of the total number of confirmed cases in the country.

Notably, three-thousand-one-hundred-and-eighty-one (3,181) of these cases are from Walvis Bay.

The Khomas region and Windhoek in particular, has shown a sharp rise in the rate of infection. Hence the restrictive measures taken. Windhoek now accounts for two-thousand-six-hundred-and-fifty-one (2,651) cases or 39.5 percent of the total confirmed cases. //Karas region recorded the third highest number of cases in the country, with 128 confirmed cases or 1.9 percent.

Clustered community transmission has been confirmed in Windhoek. In other parts of the

country, there are sporadic and clustered community outbreaks, giving rise to increasing numbers of cases, nationally.

Yesterday, 27 August 2020, we recorded our 60th COVID-related death and it was also the youngest patient, a 25 year old with no pre-existing conditions.

The tragedy of this death and the other 59 citizens who succumbed to COVID-19, highlights how vulnerable we all can be to the effects of this virus.

This is also why we should adhere very seriously to the Health & Hygiene Protocols and regulations. Fifty (50) of the COVID-related deaths occurred during the month of August alone.

Many of us are mourning the loss of loved ones, relatives and friends we have lost due to this pandemic. May their souls rest in eternal peace.

I appeal to all Namibians to take this virus seriously and exercise utmost caution in behaviour and conduct. By failing to adhere to protocols you could be placing your family members, neighbours, colleagues and other citizens, at risk. Let us all take responsibility for our health and safety, and that of others.

Each one of us must display leadership by safeguarding our lives and those around us, and not waiting for Government to police our behaviour. Discipline and responsibility must begin at home.

With evolving scientific knowledge, we are learning more about this novel coronavirus each day. This is knowledge we are using to adapt and hone our national response. We now know that the period of both quarantine and isolation can be shorter. We

now know asymptomatic individuals can safely quarantine and isolate at home under supervision.

There are encouraging supportive treatments that can improve survival, when people become very sick with COVID-19.

One of those drugs, 'REMDESIVIR', which is considered to be most effective in the world right now, arrived in Namibia on Monday.

We are rising to the challenge of both preventing new infections, as best we can, while also providing the best possible treatment for those who do become infected.

In light of the unfolding situation in the country, Cabinet met this week to assess and determine the next measures in our national response, based on key indicators and data. After extensive consultation with stakeholders and experts, it has been resolved that the current dispensation of STAGE 3 Regulations be extended across all 14 regions of the country for an additional 14 days. The extension will come into effect on 29 August 2020 until midnight 12 September 2020, with the following additional measures:

For Khomas Region, the current dispensation will be maintained and extended. Travel restrictions remain in force prohibiting exit and entry into the restricted City of Windhoek, Okahandja and Rehoboth Local Authority Areas.

For Erongo Region, the exit and entry travel restriction on the Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Arandis Local Authority Areas, is hereby lifted. Members of the public may now travel into and out of this area to other parts of the country, with exception of the City of Windhoek Local Authority Areas.

The following measures will apply in addition to existing STAGE 3 regulations for all 14 regions of the country:

1. Our measures aim to suppress the spread of the virus through the movement of people, while minimizing impacts on livelihoods and businesses. The daily curfew from 20:00 to 05:00 is therefore extended to countrywide curfew.

2. Public gatherings remain limited to a maximum of 10 persons countrywide.

3. Education:

A. Vocational Education Training Providers and Universities are to continue operating across the country. Face-to-face instruction may be conducted, where prescribed health and safety standards have been met.

B. Grades 10, 11 and 12 are to continue with face-to-face instruction, countrywide, including Windhoek.

C. Early Childhood Development, Grades Zero to Nine, are to re-open for face-to-face instruction, from 07 September 2020 countrywide, including Windhoek.

4. The Hosea Kutako International Airport will open from 1 September 2020, for the International Tourism Revival Initiative, as per modalities communicated this week by the Minister of Environment, Tourism and Forestry.

5. We know that elderly Namibians are particularly vulnerable to this virus. In consultation with the Ministry of Health & Social Services, I therefore direct all Old Age Homes across the country to take

the necessary precautionary measures and Staff Management arrangements. Caregivers should be provided with Personal Protective Equipment.

In closing,

The virus is likely to remain in our midst for a prolonged period of time and we must learn to live with it. This is true. However, learning to live with the virus does not mean going back to life as we knew it. That is not learning to live with the virus. That would be befriending the virus and allowing it to continue devastating life, health and economy.

Truly learning to live with the virus means adapting our attitudes and behaviours, so that we can reduce the damage it can do to our country.

In order to keep our hospitals operating, schools functioning and empower our businesses to grow again, it means sacrificing some of our comforts and even income generating activities.

I am aware that some citizens are increasingly frustrated, anxious and maybe discounting the introduction of new measures, altogether. This can affect our personal and shared lives.

I am confident that if we work together, acting sensibly and continue to use good judgement, Namibia can slow the spread and reduce the rate of infection and move the country towards more eased restrictions. This will require our collective and concerted effort.

Let us therefore remain united and steadfast, as responsible citizens. Let us be our brother and

sister's keeper and come together in a spirit of patience, kindness, empathy and understanding.

Let us keep the faith and stand in prayer for our Nation. Let us hold hands and pull together in the same direction, and prove that no challenge is insurmountable, for a nation united.

It is now up to each and every one of us, to make the best decisions in the interest of self, the family, community and our Nation.

Thank You.