

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB

**ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 19TH COVID-19 PUBLIC
BRIEFING ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSE MEASURES**

21 OCTOBER 2020

WINDHOEK

****Check Against Delivery.***

Good Afternoon Fellow Namibians,

Since the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic in our country in March this year, I have addressed the Namibian people through live Media Conferences in order to share information on major developments in our response and preparedness to the pandemic. The last time I addressed the Nation on our COVID-19 National Response Measures, was on 17 September 2020, the date that also marked the lapse of the State of Emergency, which I had declared six months earlier in March. Subsequent to that address, the Minister of Health and Social Services issued directives on Public Health COVID-19 General Regulations under the provisions of the Public and Environmental Health Act of 2015. These Regulations were in force from 23 September and are due to lapse at midnight, tonight, 21 October 2020.

It is important to share some facts and figures on Namibia's COVID-19 response and preparedness over the past seven months. By yesterday, 20 October 2020, and since the index case in March 2020, the country has recorded a cumulative number of 12,367 confirmed COVID-19 cases. Of these cases, 10,528 or 85 percent have recovered, while 1,707 or 14 percent, remain active.

We regret the loss of 132 Namibian lives to COVID-19 or related illnesses, which represents 1% of total cases nationally. As a country, Namibia has learnt important lessons from the COVID-19 response, both during and after the State of Emergency. These relate to effective case management of confirmed cases through the use of evidence-based interventions; effective harnessing of our logistical capabilities and capacities; contact tracing; as well as in the areas of risk communication and community engagement to sensitize the public. The implementation of the various measures to suppress and control the spread of the pandemic, have yielded positive results. We are pleased that the initial concerns, that our public health facilities and the public health system, in general, could become overwhelmed by COVID-19 cases, has not come to pass. This outcome is attributable to the hard, but necessary response measures put in place by the Government to combat the pandemic and more importantly, the fact that our people have largely complied with these measures. There were others who did not comply.

Today, in the last 4 weeks post-State of Emergency, we can report a 40 percent reduction in the number of COVID-19 related deaths. It is also worth noting that, nationally, we have experienced a 61 percent reduction in the number of

new cases. Over the last four (4) weeks, twelve (12) out the fourteen (14) regions have either reported a reduction in the number of cases or no cases at all. I commend each and every Namibian for taking the COVID-19 Infection Prevention and Control measures seriously and for doing their part to suppress the further spread of this pandemic. I cannot over-emphasize the fact that going forward, compliance and personal responsibility must continue to be at the center of our response. Surely, we cannot afford to lose more lives, as one life lost, is one life too many. While new infections, new cases and hospitalization rates have declined significantly, both in Windhoek and Walvis Bay, which were at different times regarded as epicenters of the pandemic in the country, we continue to record a rise in cases in the Oshana, Oshana and Oshikoto Regions. There is a high incidence of cases in crowded spaces and closed settings, such as school hostels, correctional facilities and police holding cells. To date, we have recorded a total number of 352 infected learners and over 300 healthcare workers.

Namibia has conducted to date, a cumulative 117,759 COVID-19 tests. Our country currently ranks 3rd on the Continent in terms of the number of persons tested per 1000 people in the population. Only Morocco and South Africa have conducted more tests and we are followed by Rwanda

at number 4. I take this opportunity to commend our response teams for working so hard and placing Namibia among the nations with the highest test-to-population ratios.

Fellow Namibians,

Our experts have been closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation in the country. Regular reports and updates have been shared with policy makers to determine the way forward in our response as we strive to save lives and protect the livelihoods of our people. Cabinet met this week to determine appropriate measures to be put in place, which will inform the next dispensation in our national and collective fight against COVID-19. I will now proceed to highlight key measures that will come into force from 22 October 2020 until midnight, 30 November 2020. The measures below will apply to all 14 regions of the country.

- 1. ALL travelers (including tourists, business travelers and all Namibians and Permit Holders) who arrive in Namibia with a negative PCR test result, that is not older than 72 hours, will be permitted to proceed to their final destination in the country. The requirement for the mandatory 5 day retest has been withdrawn.**

- 2. All travelers who arrive in Namibia with a negative PCR test result that is older than 72 hours but not older than 7 days, will be permitted to enter the country. However, they will be required to undergo 7-days supervised quarantine at home or tourism facility. In the event that these environments do not fulfill quarantine requirements, the travelers will be placed under mandatory Government quarantine facilities at own cost.**
- 3. Non-Namibians, who do not present a negative COVID-19 PCR test result, will not be granted entry into the country.**
- 4. Returning Namibian citizens or Permit Holders may enter the country with or without a COVID-19 PCR test result. In the event such persons present a positive test result or no result at all, they will be subjected to mandatory quarantine and testing or isolation, after arrival. This provision shall also apply to aircraft and marine vessel crewmembers; humanitarian aid workers, essential service providers, as well as operators and drivers of cross-border transport vehicles who arrive in the country without the requisite test.**
- 5. Restrictions on passenger numbers in public transport, private vehicles and group tour operators are herewith lifted. This means, vehicle occupancy can revert to the**

respective carrying capacities of a particular vehicle. However, drivers, passengers and operators are required to continue taking the necessary precautions

6. In line with the "Saving Lives, economies and livelihood" Campaign of the African Union, Namibia will continue to harmonize the re-opening of borders and resumption of full economic and social activities. To this end, Namibia will gradually re-open borders on reciprocal basis and resume social activities including contact sport activities; face-to-face instruction for tertiary institutions and schools where social distancing is feasible.

7. The limitation to the number of persons permitted at public gatherings shall be increased to a maximum of 200 persons until 30 November 2020.

8. The protocols for COVID-19 burials will be conducted as per previous regulations.

Fellow Namibians,

The above mentioned measures are aimed at ensuring an effective and robust response to COVID-19 in our country. In this regard, authorities will continue to employ measures to suppress the spread of the pandemic. As you may recall, the Government of Namibia had started to implement the

Tourism Revival Initiative a few weeks ago. This initiative had started to show encouraging results. Going forward, the national health protocols and regulations related to entry, quarantine and testing as announced here this afternoon will apply to all travelers irrespective of the reasons for their travel to Namibia.

The reduction in numbers of positive cases that we have observed over the past four (4) weeks is a testament to our collective efforts as a nation, to fight this pandemic together. I commend Namibians for their patience, maturity and the responsibility they have displayed during these trying months. Several weeks ago, the statistics made for sour reading. However, due to the concerted efforts of Government together with the public, and our development co-operation partners, we have been able to avert a disaster, most notably in the Erongo and the Khomas Regions, where the number of positive cases were growing exponentially.

Let me, once again, commend our healthcare personnel and all frontline workers, including uniformed forces, who have been on the frontlines of this very difficult battle, for their bravery, commitment, professionalism, selflessness and sterling all-round efforts to protect Namibia from this uncompromising health disaster. However, these successes

should not lull our nation into complacency. Let us not let our guard down. The risk of a second wave remains real and possible. This has been observed in recent weeks and months in other countries. We must therefore, maintain our level of vigilance and alertness at all times.

Once more, allow me to thank you, the Namibian people, for your cooperation in complying with the measures adopted to address this pandemic. May I once more single out our health workers and Cabinet, more specifically the Minister of Health and Social Services, his able staff, foreign embassies and Specialized UN agencies for holding hands with their Namibian brothers and sisters.

Thank you.