



REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA
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MEDIA STATEMENT

Director of the Programme,
Senior Staff Members in the Ministry,
Representatives of Development Co-operation Partners,
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

1. I welcome you to another Weekly Update on COVID-19 in Namibia. Following the outbreak, the Ministry undertook to provide regular briefings to the nation through the media on matters regarding the outbreak, at least once every week, and at more frequent intervals, should the situation dictate. The briefings take place every Wednesday.
2. Today's briefing comes shortly after His Excellency, Dr Hage G. Geingob declared a State of Emergency in Namibia on account of the COVID-19 outbreak. As of yesterday, the 17th March 2020, a cumulative number of 24 suspected cases were reported in Namibia and all of them were tested. Four specimen were testes by the private laboratory of which two tested negative and two tested positive. The latter two are the Romanian couple. Twenty specimen were tested locally and all of them tested negative for COVID-19.
3. The couple that tested positive had 25 contacts. Active contact tracing was carried out and 19 contacts were traced. Appropriate measures were taken, which include isolation and monitoring. S far no secondary transmission was observed.
4. As I indicated, our President declared a State of Emergency yesterday, 17th March 2020. The State of Emergency brings about the introduction and implementation of additional measures in the COVID-19 response and preparedness. The measures are aimed at curbing the spread of the disease and particularly to prevent the occurrence of local transmission. The measures are outlined in a Cabinet Decision, which I announce yesterday at State House.

5. The nation is urged to remain calm and to co-operate with the Ministry of Health and Social Services and other agencies of the State, so that we can defeat and break the transmission of the virus together. I take this opportunity to commend all who have been involved in ensuring that our preparedness and response activities are strengthened in order to prevent local transmission of the virus in our country. Your dedicated efforts have resulted in tangible results and successes. These include:
- Operationalization of a 24-hour toll-free hotline at the Emergency Operations Centre (EOC), for the purpose of providing information to the public and addressing inquiries from persons seeking guidance, including information on the reporting of suspected cases. Through the hotline, members of the public who need medical services are also given relevant information on COVID-19.
 - Compilation of Standard Operation Procedures (SOPs) to guide actions of all stakeholders involved in the anti-COVID-19 response. This is part of our compliance with the call by the World Health Organization on countries to strengthen prevention and control measures for COVID-19.
 - Intensification of community mobilization efforts in order to mitigate and refute misinformation, fear and panic especially from social media. Messages on COVID-19 will be sent to the public to help them better understand the pandemic. Such information is also useful for practitioners in the areas of guidance on case management and surveillance.
 - Intensified surveillance, monitoring of the situation especially at the main international ports of entry to ensure prompt case detection and response.
 - Collaboration with other institutions and OMAs to compliment the human resources needs in the MOHSS.
 - Putting in place a multi-disciplinary Emergency Response team to attend to suspected and confirmed cases 24 hours a day.
 - Deployment of the Class Two Military Field Hospital at Hosea Kutako International Airport.
 - An Incident Manager for COVID was appointed two weeks ago. The Incident Manager is responsible to coordinate all aspects of the response, namely, selecting relevant government institutions, partner organizations, assigning responsibilities, developing, implementing and evaluating control plan, and managing information for public and news media.
6. I wish to underscore and repeat the message that we have been sharing that in order to prevent the spread of the disease, our people should take the following prevention measures:
- Regular hand washing with soap and running water.
 - Covering mouth and nose with a disposable tissue or cloth when coughing or sneezing.
 - Travelers with symptoms of acute respiratory infection should practice cough etiquette and limit contact with others.
 - Avoid close contact with anyone showing symptoms of respiratory illness such as coughing and sneezing, keep a distance of one meter.
 - Avoid public gatherings.

- Thorough cooking of meat, poultry, seafood and eggs.
 - Drink plenty of fluids and do physical exercises.
 - Do not touch your eyes, nose or mouth with unwashed hands, especially if you have been in contact with sick person or with potentially infected surfaces or objects.
7. It is vital to note that, COVID-19 has specific signs and symptoms. These are dry cough, high body temperature and difficulty breathing. Thus, a mere runny nose, wet cough or moderate fever does not necessarily mean that a person has contracted COVID-19. Some of the factors to consider include a history of travel to an affected country, contact with a confirmed case of COVID-19 and fever, cough, chills, and difficulty in breathing.
8. The public is encouraged to seek immediate medical advice if infection is suspected. Where symptoms such as severe flu-like illness with recent travel history to affected countries in the past 14 days are observed or contact with a person or persons from an affected country, who is infected with the COVID-19 have been reported, immediate steps must be taken to confirm or exclude coronavirus infection.

Programme Director

9. Allow me address the issue of inappropriate use of masks and gloves. We have observed that masks and gloves are now in short supply in the shops as a result of panic buying by members of the public-. We have also observed that members of the public are moving around with masks and gloves. A mask serves to protect others from you and not to protect you against them. Wearing gloves in public for non apparent reason does not protect you from anything. It gives you a false sense of security. The most important thing is to understand how the virus is transmitted from an infective to a susceptible person and practise preventive measures as mentioned above.

Our Toll-Free Number is 0800100100 and 911. Members of the public may call these numbers free of charge to obtain information on COVID-19.

Let me thank you again for coming to this Media Briefing today.

I thank you.

