

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB
ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 21ST COVID-19 PUBLIC BRIEFING
ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSE AND PREPAREDNESS

DECEMBER 16, 2020

WINDHOEK
**Check Against Delivery.*

Comrade Vice President;
Right Honourable Prime Minister;
Honourable Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of International
Relations and Co-operation;
Honourable Ministers ;
Senior Government Officials;
Members of the Media;
Fellow Namibians,

We are nearing the end of what has been one of the most extraordinary
and challenging years in recent memory.

Ever since the arrival in our country on 13 March 2020 of an uninvited
and therefore unwelcome visitor, COVID-19, we have faced an uphill
battle, safeguarding the lives of our citizens while ensuring that our
economy stays afloat.

It has not been easy, but up until recently, we were turning the tide.

You may recall that when I addressed the nation on the occasion of the
20th COVID-19 Briefing on November 30, 2020, I expressed my concern
that we have become complacent to the danger posed by the virus and
are not adhering to the prescribed Health & Hygiene Protocols put in
place for our protection. Unfortunately, as one of the foremost thinkers
of the civil rights movement Benjamin Mays warned, "The tragedy of life
is not found in failure but in complacency." The carefree and lax
attitude many of us have displayed since my last briefing to the nation
has resulted in some reversals on the gains we were making. In this

short period of just 15 days, we have recorded 13 deaths and 2425 infections bringing the total infections recorded to 16,913 with 14,981 recoveries, 1,765 active cases and 164 deaths.

At this juncture, I wish to express my sincere condolences to the families of those Namibians who have lost their lives as a result of COVID-19 or related illness. Your loss is our loss and your pain is our pain. You cannot put a price on the value of human life and that is why I have said, one life lost in the war against COVID-19, is one life too many. I also wish to request for a minute of silence in memory of a young leader, Mandela Kapere and those who passed away due to COVID-19. I thank our frontline workers, first responders and all medical personnel who continue to work day and night, to save Namibian lives, even when the situation seems daunting. Your efforts are recognized, appreciated and highly valued.

In view of the concerning rise in the number of positive COVID-19 cases recorded in Namibia in recent weeks, I will announce necessary adjustments to the current measures in line with our national response to the pandemic.

As we have stated since the beginning of the pandemic, we will continue to implement a robust response to this unprecedented challenge.

Fellow Namibians,

Given developments in recent weeks, it is vital to take the necessary steps to ensure that our response is adequate to meet the challenge.

It is now evident that Namibia is experiencing a second wave of rising COVID-19 infections. In fact, the number of COVID-19 related hospital admissions have sharply increased in different parts of the country. The number of COVID-19 and related deaths have also increased in recent weeks. Against this background, it is imperative that some amendments to the Regulations are effected, in order to suppress further spread of COVID-19 in the country and hopefully engender changes in public behaviour.

Following, are amendments to the Public Health COVID-19 Regulations issued by the Minister of Health and Social Services, under the Public and Environmental Health Act, 2015 (Act No. 1 of 2015). The amendments are recommended for implementation with effect from 23:59 Wednesday 16 December 2020, for a period of fourteen (14) days, until 30 December 2020:

1. Public gatherings

The number of public gatherings is reduced from the current limit of two hundred (200), to a maximum of fifty (50) persons indoors and a maximum of one hundred (100) persons outdoors, at a time. It is a requirement that conveners and organizers of such gatherings keep

registers of attendees at each gathering, record body temperatures of attendees in such registers and provide facilities for guests to wash their hands with soap or to sanitise their hands. Physical distancing of no less than 1.5meters between persons, must be maintained at all times.

- 2.** Correct wearing of face-masks remains mandatory in all public settings.

Enforcement of this measure will be intensified.

Owners of retail outlets, shopping malls, offices, bars, shebeens and entertainment venues etc. are urged to ensure that persons entering or those present on their premises abide by the public health regulations, such as correct wearing of face-masks, physical distancing, sanitizing or washing of hands.

- 3.** Bars, nightclubs, casinos and all restaurants are to close for business at 22:00, Monday to Sunday.

All indoor dining tables to be arranged two (2) meters apart.

Associated public health measures must be complied with.

- 4.** With respect to public passenger transportation, all drivers and passengers are to wear masks throughout the trip/journey.

- 5.** Enforcement is critical to ensure adherence to these public health measures in public places and the Law Enforcement

Agencies are hereby directed to deploy personnel and ensure compliance.

6. Other gazzeted Regulations not mentioned today, and pronounced in the last COVID-19 briefing of 30 November, remain in force and adherence thereto is mandatory.

The COVID-19 pandemic is with us and all indications are that it will be around for much longer.

For this reason, as a nation, we must learn to live with COVID-19. The only way to do so, to protect ourselves, families, neighbours, communities and our country, is to faithfully adhere to the measures put in place.

Fellow Namibians,

COVID-19 is fatal. Our actions over the next several weeks will determine the trajectory of our battle against this invisible enemy. Through a collective effort involving Government, the Private sector, the media, faith-based organisations and other community leaders, civil society and our uniformed services, we managed to bring the rate of infection under control. It took sacrifice, hard work, diligence and teamwork.

Now, more than ever, we must rekindle that spirit, to reverse this negative trend. I believe, we can do it again, by holding hands and pulling in the same direction.

With regards to vaccination, I would like the Minister of Health to elaborate on the technical matter.

Our economy has taken a big knock, but as I have informed you, as a result of various short and medium term mitigating measures, we are steadying the ship. Let us continue to look out for one another. Where need be, let us remind one another, as brothers and sisters, to adhere to the safety and health protocols.

Data has shown that correct wearing of face-masks, reduces transmission of the virus by up to 90%. I appeal to, and once again, implore all Namibians to make it their personal and collective responsibility to defeat COVID-19.

In so doing, we will protect our frontline personnel and the public health system to provide care to the most needy and vulnerable members of our society.

I am aware that many Namibians are preparing to embark on their journeys for the holiday season. I therefore, take this opportunity to wish all our people safe travels and a joyous festive season. Please adhere to the safety protocols for COVID-19.

To all road users, especially the drivers, I wish to say, maintain the legal speed limits and other traffic regulations. More specifically, adhere to

safe following distances and only overtake when it is absolutely safe to do so.

The lives of our people are precious. Let us prevent avoidable fatalities on our roads this holiday season. Let us protect one another and let us join hands to suppress the spread of COVID-19 in our country.

I thank you.