

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY THE PRESIDENT DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB

AT A MEDIA BRIEFING ON THE

MIGRATION TO STAGE 3 OF THE STATE OF EMERGENCY

ON ACCOUNT OF COVID-19

THURSDAY, 28 MAY 2020

WINDHOEK

Check Against Delivery

Fellow Namibians,

I would like to welcome all of you to this press briefing to inform the nation on the latest developments with regards to the COVID-19 situation in Namibia. At the onset I wish to express my utmost gratitude to the Vice President, the Prime Minister, Minister of Health, the Government of Namibia, as well as the Private Sector, Civil Society, faith-based organisations, Media and Academia, for your unwavering support as we endeavor to contain this pandemic in our country.

I also want to express my sincere appreciation to all Namibians who have pulled together in a Harambee Spirit, enduring the difficulty and limitations under lockdown to ensure that we keep the COVID-19 situation under control.

I am aware that the lockdowns are not easy to endure, as they infringe on our rights as human beings but I am glad to note that as Namibians, we have adopted a selfless approach and understood that to win the war against this invisible enemy, we need to make sacrifices that go far and beyond the norm.

Our efforts have not gone unnoticed and have garnered praise in the international media for our response to COVID-19, which has involved a collective response of many stakeholders, both governmental and non-governmental. This should motivate us to persevere against this challenge as a united force until we are able to rid our society of all COVID-19 cases.

You may recall that on April 30, 2020,

Government announced the gradual reopening of social and economic activities under the State of Emergency.

This meant that all 14 regions of the country migrated from a full lockdown under STAGE 1 which lasted a period of 38 days - to more reduced restrictions with Strict Precautionary measures under STAGE 2. STAGE 2 is due to lapse at midnight on Monday, 01st June 2020, following a 28-day observance period or two incubation periods.

It has been 76 days since we mobilized Namibia's National Response to COVID-19, following confirmation of the Index Case on March 13, 2020. Our country has to date recorded 22 confirmed cases, which have all been classified to be sporadic and travel related.

There has been up to this point, no incidence of community transmission in Namibia. Of the persons diagnosed with the coronavirus, 14 have recovered and are reunited with their families. Fortunately, there has been no COVID-19 related death in the country to date. I wish the remaining 8 patients a full recovery.

Namibia sustained a 45-day period of zero new infections, until a rise in new infections which began on 20 May 2020. Since then, there have been six (6) new confirmed cases. All the new cases have been placed into isolation facilities at /Kharas, Hardap and Erongo regions. The identification, contact tracing, testing and quarantine of exposed individuals, is ongoing.

Fellow Namibians,

From the onset, I have maintained that the health of Namibians remains our first priority. Government acknowledges that actions taken to strike a balance between protecting the lives and livelihoods of Namibians has been challenging for business, workers and households, alike. These have not been easy decisions, however they have been taken in good faith, to safeguard Namibian lives for today and tomorrow.

Despite the measures that we have put in place, let us maintain the respect of human dignity and express compassion towards one another as Namibians. Therefore, I ask that our men and women in uniform who have done a sterling job during this difficult time, desist from using heavy-handedness in enforcing the Regulations.

Cabinet met on Tuesday, 26 May 2020 to evaluate available data and assess our national level of preparedness to respond to COVID-19. We deliberated extensively on the measures to reopen the economy without risking reversal of public health gains made. Based on key indicators derived from a weekly Monitoring Dashboard, there is merit to further migrate to a level of reduced restriction.

Therefore, at midnight on Monday 01st June 2020 all 14 regions, with the exception of the Walvis Bay Local Authority Area, will transit from STAGE 2 to more moderate precautions under STAGE 3, until 29 June 2020, for a period of 28 days or two incubation periods.

Due to recent developments the Walvis Bay Local Authority Area will revert to STAGE 1 with

immediate feedback for an extended period of 7 days and will remain effective until midnight 08 June 2020. This strict but necessary restriction on the movement of people is needed to ascertain the extent of possible spread of the disease. The few days also enable the Public Health Sector to identify, trace and test those who have come into contact with the two confirmed cases. The Minister of Health will provide a more elaborate explanation regarding the rationale behind this decision.

Government will continue to closely monitor the situation on daily basis and take appropriate action, as matters unfold.

I have been approached by the Churches, which continue to fulfill an important role in our communities, providing spiritual guidance and

physical nourishment to our communities during these challenging times. With the increase of the public gathering limit to 50 people under stage 3, we look forward to an increased presence of our church leaders, clergy and members of congregations in helping to bring the message of hope as well as much needed relief to the afflicted. We remain committed to partnering with our Churches and other faith-based organizations in defeating this unprecedented pandemic.

In conclusion,

A relaxation in restrictions does not imply the disappearance of COVID-19 from our midst. To the contrary, reduced restrictions demand heightened personal vigilance and greater responsibility on individuals, communities and

institutions, alike. The public is urged to support Government action by not becoming complacent, but by complying with the Regulations and cooperating with authorities to safeguard the collective health of the Nation.

Once again, I would like to thank Namibians for their support and also emphasize that we must maintain unity of purpose, hold hands and pull together with a sense of urgency. Let us work together to maintain our safety and health. Through collective vision, through unity of purpose, we will defeat this invisible enemy.

I now invite the Minister of Health and Social Services to outline the detailed Guidelines under Stage 3.

Thank you.