

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY
HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB
ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 20TH COVID-19 PUBLIC BRIEFING ON THE NATIONAL
RESPONSE MEASURES.

30 NOVEMBER 2020

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery.*

Fellow Namibians,

At the outset, I would like to thank all Namibians for the peaceful and orderly manner in which you have conducted yourselves during the campaigns leading up to the recently held Local and Regional Authority elections. Our multi-party democracy has grown roots and is maturing. Thank you to all voters who took time to participate in this democratic process. Ultimately, democracy and the people of Namibia are the winners.

As we find ourselves drawing closer to the festive season, I am aware that you are prioritizing various family and social events. However, we should bear in mind that COVID-19 remains a threat. To date, fourteen-thousand-three-hundred-and-forty-five (14,345) people have been infected with the virus in our country and the lives of 151 Namibians have been lost. In this regard, we pay particular homage to our frontline-workers who have been working diligently to ensure that our fight is robust and effective.

Namibia continues to tackle the pandemic on different fronts as prescribed by our National COVID-19 Response and Preparedness Plan, which focuses on safeguarding public health and the livelihood of our people.

This pandemic is the biggest challenge to face our country since independence, both in its nature and scope. Equally, Government's response to the pandemic has been extensive and resolute, in terms of resource mobilization to suppress the spread of the virus, while responding to associated socio-economic impacts.

In terms of its effects, the pandemic has had a negative impact on our lives and livelihoods. No aspect of our society has been left untouched. Our economy has borne the brunt of this pandemic in terms of jobs that have been lost, reduced productivity, business closures and declining disposable income. The full extent of this impact on our economy is yet to be fully determined.

The Ministry of Labour, Industrial Relations and Employment Creation in collaboration with the Namibia Statistics Agency will further ascertain the scope of the impact on business, economy and jobs. Some indicators are clear though.

It is against this background that the pace of the economic recovery will depend crucially on policy interventions and actions that will be taken beyond the lockdown. The Government is seized with final preparations for a holistic recovery programme for the nation, as was committed to during the Mid-Term Budget Review in October 2020.

Stakeholders have been consulted and the Harambee Prosperity Plan for the four-year period (2021-2025), which includes the Economic Recovery Programme, will be launched in February 2021.

The COVID-19 experience has not been pleasant. Our economy has been hurt, thousands have lost employment, once thriving businesses have closed, children have been home for months on end, away from school. Hence, we must remain vigilant and be prepared for any eventuality, including the possibility of a second wave. Considering the precarious nature of our economy, this is a scenario we can ill afford.

Fellow Namibians,

We do not have any other choice.

I observed, with great concern, that we are becoming complacent to the danger and are not adhering to the prescribed Health & Hygiene Protocols. We cannot afford to relax now, we must rather intensify the fight against COVID-19. In this regard, we must continue what we started by:

- Enhancing Risk Communication and Communicate Engagement;
- Testing, tracing contacts and timeously isolating cases;
- Encouraging the public to continue coming forward, to seek testing if they think they have been exposed;

- Calling on the community to provide correct information for contact tracing purposes and case monitoring, when they seek health services including testing;
- Strengthening screening at Ports of Entry;
- Continuing to use data for decision making, be able to pick up on possible warning signs of resurgence.

Fellow Namibians,

The worst-case scenario as projected by our WHO Models estimated the loss of nearly 4,000 Namibian lives. However, the prompt and decisive measures taken by Government early into the pandemic have materially tempered and shielded our communities from the full wrath of this pandemic.

As we enter into the festive season and prepare to travel to different parts of the country to reunite with our loved ones, let us do so with all precaution to protect ourselves, communities and our loved ones. The public health measures remain the most powerful weapon we have at our disposal. They need to be observed and enforced at all times.

As we enjoy the festivities during this holiday season, I caution that we must continue to observe physical distancing, maintaining hand hygiene by washing and sanitizing at all times. Also, remember that wearing your mask correctly is mandatory.

This has been a challenging year. Although we were bent, we did not break. We have remained steadfast in the eye of the storm. The conduct of Namibians during the course of the year fills me with pride and hope for the future.

Not only have we conducted ourselves with discipline during the pandemic, but this bodes well for the future, as we begin to rebuild.

To eventually overcome this most challenging battle, we must continue to stand together and pull in the same direction. Through the National COVID-19 Response

and Preparedness Plan, Government will continue to carefully monitor and stay on top of the evolving situation regarding the pandemic. As and when required, we will adapt the measures accordingly.

The current dispensation of measures to fight COVID-19 which came into force on 17 October, will expire at midnight, 30 November 2020. As the pandemic evolves, our response must be adjusted accordingly. From tomorrow, 01 December 2020 to 25 January 2021, the following measures will apply.

Public gatherings

Public gatherings will remain at 200 people. Members of the public are strongly encouraged to arrange and host all public gatherings outdoors. Registers of attendees at such gatherings and events must be maintained.

People arriving in Namibia

Requirements for COVID-19 Test Results:

1. All non-Namibian travelers arriving in Namibia are required to present a negative COVID-19 PCR test result *from the country of departure*, which is not older than 72 hours.
2. This requirement does not apply to children under the age of 5 years.
3. Non-Namibian travelers arriving with a negative result, which is older than 72 hours, will be placed in quarantine and tested for COVID-19 on the same day, at own cost.

If results come out negative, they will be released from quarantine. If positive, they will be isolated at own cost, according to Namibia's isolation protocols.

4. Returning Namibian citizens or holders of Namibian permanent residence or employment permits may enter the country without a COVID-19 PCR test result or with a positive result. But in cases of arrival without a COVID-19 test result, s/he will be swabbed immediately upon arrival while observing quarantine and if the result comes out negative, they will be released from quarantine.
5. A Namibian who arrives with a positive COVID-19 PCR test result, will be isolated at a designated isolation facility or home isolation, subject to approval after assessment by an authorized medical officer.

Liquor sale restriction

Sale of alcohol by shebeens, bars and nightclubs shall be extended to midnight.

The businesses must:

6. Ensure physical distancing
7. All business premises must be equipped with functional hand-sanitizer dispensers, at all times.

Keeping COVID-19 Registers

Shopping outlets and businesses will no longer be required to keep Registers of persons visiting their premises. Registers should, however, be maintained at public events such as weddings, funerals, religious gatherings, sports and entertainment events.

Swabbing of Human remains

Henceforth, swabbing and testing for COVID-19 will only be conducted on human remains of persons who had symptoms consistent with COVID-19 or were in direct contact with confirmed COVID-19 cases prior to death.

Funerals

The Minister will provide more information on the new measures developed with regard to funerals.

I would like to thank you for your sacrifice, cooperation and resilience throughout the year. Let us continue to act with a sense of purpose and as a united people. Let us shun the vices of division, regionalism, tribalism and racism. Our journey of building a caring Namibian House for all is worth pursuing. We must defeat COVID-19 and its devastating impacts on our socio-economic livelihoods.

Therefore, during the festive season, I call on the solidarity of each and every citizen to help those who are in need, to care for the weak and vulnerable, and most importantly, not to let your guard down. Continue to comply with the preventive measures put in place to protect you.

May God bless you all and may God bless the Republic of Namibia.

Thank you.