

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB

**ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 29th COVID-19 PUBLIC BRIEFING ON
THE NATIONAL RESPONSE MEASURES**

15 JUNE 2021

WINDHOEK

Checked Against Delivery

Fellow Namibians, Good Evening.

I address you at a time when we are faced with great difficulty. Our war against COVID-19 continues and it is a war of attrition that has taken a heavy toll. The majority, if not all Namibians, have been affected by this pandemic, in one way or another. Each family, household and community, has been touched by this invisible and merciless enemy. However, as it was once said, "Where the willingness is great, the difficulties cannot be great." Although, the pandemic is relentless, we must remain steadfast and resolute. Our minds may be frail, our bodies may be weary, but our collective spirit must remain unbreakable. Now, more than ever, we must rise to the challenge and summon the will to overcome the difficulties we face.

In my own family, my wife and I have experienced the devastating effects of COVID-19. Similarly, other leaders including the Vice President and his wife, the Speaker of the National Assembly and his wife, the leader of the Official Opposition, several Ministers and leaders in Public Service have all been affected. I take this opportunity to express our sincere appreciation to all those who kept us in prayer, for a quick recovery. I also thank the hardworking frontline workers attending to those in need and express gratitude for the messages that reached us from our friends at home, the continent and world over. These messages strengthened us and the expression of true solidarity gave us solace, during truly trying times.

However, many compatriots have unfortunately not recovered. Our hearts go out to those who are still in pain and battling this disease. This is indeed a sombre period in our country's history. As it has been reported, Namibia has now passed the 1,000 mark of men, women and children, who have lost their lives due to COVID-19. The loss of so many lives is difficult to bear. I take this opportunity to express sincere condolences, on my own behalf and on behalf of the Government, to the bereaved families who have lost their loved ones.

For more than 14 months since the Index Case, our country has been able to manage the pandemic, mainly through deliberate measures taken by the Government to suppress

the spread of the Virus; to strengthen our health system in order to care for those who need care and to spread the message of vigilance, precaution and personal responsibility. These Public Health Regulations that Government has put in place have served our country well. Namibia has been lauded regionally and internationally, for our effective response to the pandemic. Over the past 4 weeks, the situation has however taken a turn for the worst. We have recorded an exponential increase in the number of new infections, hospitalizations and deaths recorded daily. In addition to the existing measures currently in force, we must take steps to stem these worrying trends.

The dedicated team of experts involved in various Offices, Ministries and Agencies and the Private Sector, have been actively monitoring the situation and assessing the progression of the pandemic in our country. It has therefore been decided that the current measures to combat the COVID-19 pandemic must be further strengthened. This adjustment to the measures goes hand in hand with the mobilization of additional resources to bolster testing capacity; creating additional space for treatment for those who are ill; improving the provision of much needed oxygen and recruiting additional healthcare workers.

In light of the unfolding trajectory of the pandemic in the country and the imperative to safeguard the lives and livelihoods of Namibians, the existing Public Health Regulations announced on 28 May and set to expire on 30 June, will now be amended. The aim of this adjustment is to break the momentum of the pandemic, currently characterized by 'Widespread Community Transmission' in our country.

I am dismayed by recent revelations of Namibians who blatantly disregard Regulations. The videos of our young people seen partying and flouting the Public Health and Safety Protocols are disappointing. Such wanton recklessness, selfishness and irresponsibility at a time that our country is warding off the peak of the pandemic should not be allowed to continue. I wish to inform those organizing and engaging in such activities, that there will be consequences, as provided for in our laws and Regulations.

The adjustments which will come into force at midnight on Wednesday 16 June 2021, for a period of fourteen (14) days until 30 June 2021, are as follows:

1. Windhoek has recorded 52 percent of total cases in the country and is currently the epicenter in our fight against COVID-19. To contain the further spread of the disease, exit and entry into the Windhoek-Okahandja-Rehoboth Local Authority Areas is restricted. With exception for returning residents; essential service providers in possession of the relevant permit; emergency medical cases and the transportation of human remains to other regions for burial purposes, will be allowed.
2. Public Gatherings as defined in the Regulations, are reduced to ten (10) persons per event and should not last longer than two (2) hours for indoor events.
3. The Curfew shall remain in force countrywide, as per current Regulations, from 22:00 to 04:00, daily.
4. Education: Face-to-Face teaching and learning for Primary, Secondary schools and Higher Education Institutions including Technical Education Providers, in affected areas, is suspended effective 17 June to 30 June.
 - a) However, for the rest of the country, the Minister of Education, Arts & Culture will announce a 'Winter Holiday', with exception for Grades 10, 11 and A-Levels who need to continue Face-to-Face learning in preparation for external examinations.
 - b) All examinations for tertiary students will be undertaken online.
5. Restrictions related to liquor: The sale and purchase of liquor from Shebeens and Bars, is restricted from 09:00 to 18:00, Monday to Saturday, on take-away basis only. The on-site consumption of liquor is prohibited, except at restaurants, guesthouses, hotels and similar establishments where guests reside.
6. Gambling Houses and Night Clubs are deemed to be high-risk under the circumstances and will not be permitted to operate. Kapana traders may only operate for takeaway and private consumption.

7. Sports: All contact sports as defined in the Regulations, are prohibited and no spectators will be permitted at live sporting events.
8. Passenger Restrictions: To make adequate provision for Physical Distancing and to avoid overloading in motor vehicles, all public transport operators may only load passengers to half the capacity of the vehicle.
9. Burials: With the rise in deaths, we are also experiencing an increase in funerals. The existing protocols for conducting COVID-19 burials will be maintained - Burials are to take place within seven (7) days and the public is urged to serve meals at funerals on Take-Away basis only.

Fellow Namibians,

I must emphasize that these measures are necessary and are not intended to be punitive. They are designed to help our country prevent the deterioration of the situation. In this context, I urge Namibians to support their implementation to the fullest extent possible.

It is disappointing to note that a few of our citizens have taken to social media to propagate falsehoods and misleading information regarding the safety and effectiveness of the COVID-19 vaccines. Vaccination is an important weapon in our arsenal towards reaching herd immunity and defeating COVID-19. I therefore encourage all eligible Namibians to go out and receive their COVID-19 vaccine. The rumours going around must be debunked. It is for our own good and I implore you, as responsible and caring citizens, to take the vaccine.

Let us not abandon our mindsets of caution and mindfulness. Now is not the time to let our guards down. Rather, now is the time to pull together and reaffirm our resolve to win the war against COVID-19. Let every Namibian, young and old, become a fighter on the frontlines of this war. Let us become paragons of discipline and resilience. Let us hold hands and form a united front so that once and for all, we can overcome COVID-19 as One Namibia, One Nation.

In addition to what I have announced this evening, the Minister of Health & Social Services and Ministers of Education, will, tomorrow, provide a more elaborate briefing on the technical aspects of these amendments.

Thank you.