

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB

ON THE OCCASION OF THE 18TH COVID-19 PUBLIC BRIEFING ON
THE NATIONAL RESPONSE MEASURES UPON LAPSE OF THE
COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY

17 SEPTEMBER 2020

WINDHOEK

Checked against delivery

Good Afternoon, Fellow Namibians,

Following the outbreak of coronavirus in Namibia on 13 March 2020, I declared a State of Emergency on account of COVID-19 as a natural disaster from 17 March 2020. The National Assembly supported the extension of the COVID-19 State of Emergency for a period of 6 months, which will lapse at midnight tonight, 17 September 2020.

To manage the pandemic under the COVID-19 State of Emergency, Cabinet adopted 5 levels of restriction, ranging from a full lockdown of social and economic activities under Stage 1, to more moderate and gradually relaxed precautionary measures under Stages 2, 3 and 4. Stage 5 had envisaged 'A New Normal' where we could look forward to life resuming some semblance of normalcy.

The COVID-19 State of Emergency is due to lapse at midnight tonight, 17 September 2020, along with current Regulations.

This week Cabinet held extensive deliberations to consider expiry of the COVID-19 State of Emergency and to determine appropriate measures to put in place, beyond 17 September 2020.

Government's priority to protect Namibian lives, in a sustainable manner, means preserving the health of Namibians, while mitigating the broader social and economic impacts caused by the COVID-19 pandemic. While we have observed positive outcomes from the response measures on public health, such as the declining rates of infection, however, our economy, income and job security have been adversely affected as we implemented these necessary measures. Yes, the virus is deadly, however we are aware that poverty also kills.

It is this understanding that has informed Government's response, which continually weighed the risk of widespread community transmission, against the gains of restricted movement to curb the spread of the disease within our communities.

Scientific evidence at our disposal shows that the cost of no action would have been far greater. I can confidently state that the Regulations introduced under the State of Emergency have, up to this point, averted widespread community transmissions in our country. Managing the rate of infection has therefore been critical to a successful national COVID-19 response.

Fellow Namibians,

The average number of confirmed daily new cases continues on a downward trend; from 317 cases reported on 23 August and 167 cases reported on 12 September, yesterday, Wednesday 16 September we recorded a low of only 63 new cases. This represents a further 30 percent reduction in daily new infections, countrywide, over the last 7 days.

Walvis Bay, once the epicenter, recorded at peak, a record of 102 cases on 07 August 2020. Today, we have recorded just 3 new cases at Walvis Bay. For Windhoek, which has become the epicenter in our fight against this disease, at

peak recorded 245 cases on 23 August 2020. Today, Windhoek recorded 62 new cases.

This is indicative that measures to suppress the spread have worked, as testing and contact tracing have not been relaxed and remain constant.

Fellow Namibians,

During the COVID-19 State of Emergency, Government diverted and allocated resources to the Ministry of Health and Social Services, which is spearheading our war against this invisible enemy. These investments have significantly strengthened our level of preparedness to respond to an upsurge in cases.

The State of Emergency Regulations have achieved a measure of success. Having assessed and weighed both the positive and negative impacts of the Regulations; having considered the additional capacity created during the 6-month period; and having listened to your extensive discussions and contributions, it was resolved that the State

of Emergency, upon expiry at midnight tonight, 17 September, will not be extended.

Moving forward, we will monitor the situation for a period of 14 days, to determine the way forward, under a new dispensation. When warranted, risk-appropriate measures will be introduced. As from 18 September 2020, new Directives will be issued by the Minister of Health, in terms of the provisions of the Public and Environmental Act.

Fellow Namibians,

Government utilized the 6-month period of the State of Emergency to strengthen our systems. We spared no effort or resource to reinforce our public healthcare system and other frontline sectors, to the best of our ability and within the financial constraints. With the lapse of Regulations – it must dawn on each and every citizen that we are now at a critical time.

This is a defining moment in our trajectory to combat COVID-19. The rate of transmission correlates directly to our

personal conduct and is driven primarily by our movement and behavioural choices with regards to social and physical distancing, hygiene and commitment to wear facemasks to suppress the spread. When making plans for yourself, family, business, event or congregation, we urge you to consider this reality for everyone's benefit.

The possibility of a second wave of infections remains real and is a risk that we must manage, proactively. We are not out of the woods yet and not by a long shot. Now is the time to exercise maximum personal responsibility and vigilance.

The coronavirus pandemic is a global tragedy on a scale that the world has not experienced in a long time. It has affected each and every one of our lives in ways we could not have imagined or prepared for.

In a space of a few months, we have been called upon to introspect and reach into the deepest parts of our psyches, to summon the resolve to persevere, the strength to endure

and the courage to move forward with hope, faith and dignity.

I am confident that through this challenging experience, we have developed a greater understanding of just how intricately connected our lives are. I said in my speech on Independence Day earlier this year that, "Although the odds appear to be stacked against us, let us summon the courage and ingenuity to continue the work we have commenced, with a sense of unity and common purpose."

Now, moving forward, we will continue to hold hands in a spirit of brotherhood, sisterhood and national fraternity, having developed a deeper understanding of our interdependency and thereby continuing to live our lives in a responsible manner and adopting a more harmonious coexistence with our fellow citizens.

Therefore, let us move forward with a greater determination to preserve our health and pursue our dreams in a Namibia that is more resilient and more equipped to deal with whatever challenges we may face in the journey ahead. One

thing is certain; our Nation will emerge from this ordeal, stronger than before.

Finally, let me take this opportunity to pay a special tribute to all our uniformed services and our frontline health workers, who have put themselves in front of the virus, as we have battled this unprecedented pandemic.

To all our doctors, nurses, Emergency Medical Technicians (EMTs), transporters, pharmacists and all of those who support patient care. You have exemplified the spirit of sacrifice and patriotism. And as I think of those men and women who have lost their lives to this pandemic, in service to their fellow human beings, I am reminded of the words of Napoleon Hill who said, "Great achievement is usually born of great sacrifice, and is never the result of selfishness".

May their souls rest in eternal peace. And may their dedication and selflessness inspire us to strive towards obtaining great achievements within our Namibian House.

Thank you and God bless Namibia.