

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB

**ON THE OCCASION OF THE 17TH COVID-19 BRIEFING TO
THE NATION ON NATIONAL RESPONSE MEASURES UNDER
STAGE 3 OF THE COVID-19 STATE OF EMERGENCY**

11 SEPTEMBER 2020

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery.*

Good Afternoon, Fellow Namibians,

The situation in the country remains complex and it is evolving. To date, Namibia has recorded a total number of 9,437 confirmed cases: 4,898 of these have recovered and 4,441 remain active. We deeply regret the loss of 98 Namibian lives to COVID-related illnesses, of which 2 were health workers from Windhoek and Swakopmund. The greatest expression of our humanity is found in service to others. We therefore honour and thank our frontline workers for their loyalty, bravery and willingness to place their own lives at risk on a daily basis, in order to preserve others. May the souls of the departed, rest in eternal peace.

Fellow Namibians,

Since the highest reported incident of daily new cases – that of 316 on 23 August 2020 - the number of daily confirmed cases has been declining. From 29 August, to date - the number of reported new daily cases has declined, from an average of 227 to 181 cases per day. This represents a 20 percent reduction in the average number of new cases reported daily, countrywide.

Geographically, we recorded during the same period, the following reductions in the confirmed number of new infections: Erongo Region by 50 percent, Khomas Region – 24 percent; Omusati Region – 38 percent and in Oshana Region – 32 percent.

This suggests a slowing rate of transmission, which could be attributable to the measures introduced, such as the countrywide curfew.

However, these signs are still in the early days and Namibia is still relatively early into the epidemic, as far as the establishment of community transmission in other parts of the country exists. The number of new cases will continue to fluctuate because these numbers are influenced by a range of factors, including the national testing and tracing capacity, public compliance and possibility of an upsurge in other parts of the country. The epidemic remains dynamic and Namibians must therefore continue to be vigilant in order to break the chain of transmission.

Regions which previously recorded lower cases, are now recording rising rates of infection. This is a matter of concern. New cases increased in the Kavango East Region by 138 percent, 78 percent in Otjozonzupa Region, 69 percent in //Kharas Region and by 40 percent in Hardap Region. While the majority of people do not become very ill from COVID-19, others with pre-existing conditions can become gravely ill. In this regard, our hospitals are reporting high patient volumes of COVID-19 related admissions. The Government is, therefore, increasing the capacities for testing as well as hospital-based isolation across the country. In so doing, we will effectively identify, trace, manage and treat COVID-19 patients, while and simultaneously suppress the spread of the virus.

While increasing testing capacity has been challenging, our laboratories are working tirelessly to meet the increasing demand. In the same vein, I appreciate and commend our laboratory workers, for their diligent work in providing this crucial service in our national response to this pandemic.

Fellow Namibians,

The current moderate precautionary measures under STAGE 3 of the State of Emergency (which, are set to lapse at midnight on Saturday), will be extended to all 14 regions of the country for an additional five (5) days.

The following measures will apply to all 14 regions from Sunday, 13 September 2020 until midnight Thursday, 17 September 2020:

1.Travel restrictions into and out of the City of Windhoek, Okahandja and Rehoboth Local Authority Areas remain in force.

2.International travel:

a.Travel out of Namibia will be permitted via Hosea Kutako International Airport, subject to quarantine at own cost upon return.

b.Entry and exit into Namibia for business travel purposes will be permitted via Hosea Kutako International Airport. This is in addition to the tourism revival initiative and subject to quarantine at own cost upon arrival or return.

3. **The number of persons per public gathering is increased to a maximum of 50, countrywide. This includes social gatherings such as weddings, funerals and religious gatherings.**
4. **To complement economic activities, the daily curfew hours will now commence from 22:00 to 05:00 countrywide.**
5. **The following business activities will be permitted to resume, countrywide, including within the restricted areas of the City of Windhoek, Okahandja and Rehoboth Local Authority:**
 - a. **Restaurants, Cafes & Informal Food Traders may reopen for sit down meals and may sell alcohol for onsite consumption only.**
 - b. **For Shebeens, Bars and Liquor Outlets, trading hours for the sale of alcohol will remain the same countrywide and alcohol is only to be sold for off-site consumption.**
 - c. **Entertainment events, conferences and workshops may resume, in compliance with the limit on public gatherings as well as health and hygiene protocols.**
 - d. **Nightclubs and gambling houses are to remain closed for the duration of this period. Due to the curfew, these businesses may not be able to operate.**
 - e. **Contact sports will not be permitted to resume, considering challenges to comply with public health measures. All non-contact sports however, are permitted to continue as has been the case. For those of you who may question why contact sports, such as football, are taking place in Europe for example, please note that these sports are taking place**

within a “Bubble” system where plays are completely isolated from their families and the rest of the public.

f.All businesses are expected to adhere to the guidelines stipulating the number of persons permitted inside an establishment per square meter.

6.I urge all members of the public to maintain strict hand hygiene and the wearing of masks at all times in public spaces. The public should apply discretion and maintain social distancing by staying home and avoiding large crowds; and maintain physical distancing by keeping a distance of 1.5m between persons. These basic measures are our first line of defense against an enemy that we cannot see.

Sunday 13 September will mark exactly 6 months since the Index Case was confirmed in our country. We are aware that our best intended responses to the pandemic have had an adverse effect on livelihoods and our economy. But these necessary measures have helped shield many Namibians from experiencing severe effects on their health and livelihoods. This is a complex social, economic and health challenge, one that has induced public discussions on how best to overcome the myriad of challenges we face. In the process of responding to these challenges, let us do so in a spirit of unity, in good faith and with the best intentions for all in mind, and more specifically for our most vulnerable citizens.

I am acutely aware that, for the past 6 months, the restrictions have been more than daunting. But even as we grow weary, the virus does not grow tired with us and we must therefore persevere, until we overcome, and overcome we will. In conclusion, I would like to thank each and every citizen who has cooperated diligently and continues to play their part in the fight against COVID-19 by adhering to regulations and assisting fellow citizens in need. I thank our local business community, our churches and faith based organizations, as well as our youth for the sterling humanitarian role played in assisting Government and the people of Namibia in the fight against COVID-19.

I also thank our development co-operation partners, humanitarian aide workers and the diplomatic community for their acts of international friendship and solidarity, during this very trying time. Namibia is a child of international solidarity and your contributions have been instrumental in our efforts. With your continued support and assistance, we believe Namibia will weather the COVID 19 storm, to emerge stronger.

At this juncture, let me express my appreciation to the public for your support in this fight. Yesterday, I put out a tweet, announcing that I will be delivering my speech today and soliciting inputs from Namibians. This tweet received 911 likes, 252 retweets and 71 comments. I am overwhelmed by your responses and I thank you for your frank and honest opinions, as well as the humour.

What I can gather from the responses is that the majority of Namibians support the measures and have realized the positive effect these have had in curbing the spread of infection. Some of you suggested for a lifting of the lockdown and maintaining the curfew, but from 21h00 or 22h00. One of you even tweeted John Maxwell's famous quote, "The pessimist complains about the wind. The optimist expects it to change. The leader adjusts the sails". There are those complaining about the measures, there are those expecting change but as a leader, one has to strike the balance by adjusting the sails.

It is unfortunate that some Namibians believe that COVID-19 only affects others and the measures should therefore not apply to them. This disease does not discriminate and we are all affected, directly and indirectly. Therefore, we are all at risk. Selfishness and prioritizing self-interest will not help us to defeat this common enemy, but will only worsen the situation.

Let us hold hands, because only when we hold hands and pull together in the same direction, will we be able to defeat COVID-19.

Thank you for your attention.