

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY

DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB AT A MEDIA BRIEFING ON THE NATIONAL MIGRATION
FROM STAGE 3 TO STAGE 4 & ERONGO REGION SPECIFIC RESPONSE

JUNE 22, 2020

WINDHOEK

Check Against Delivery

Good Afternoon, Fellow Namibians.

Over the past several weeks, there has been an increase in the number of COVID-19 cases in the country. We have to date, a total of 63 confirmed cases, with 28 new cases reported during the past 7-day period. Twenty-four (24) out of the 28 newly reported cases originate from Erongo region, which records the highest number of diagnosed cases in the country since announcement of the Index Case in the country exactly 100 days ago, on 14 March 2020. The incidence of new infections, at Walvis Bay in particular, confirms the presence of isolated cluster outbreaks at the town. Targeted testing through active case search is being conducted by the Ministry of Health and Social Services to determine the possibility of community transmission.

On Tuesday 05th May 2020 the country transitioned from STAGE 2 with Strict Precautions, to STAGE 3 with Moderate Precautions, with exception of Walvis Bay, followed by the Erongo Region, for which it became necessary to revert to STAGE 1 lockdown on 08 June 2020. The decision is consistent with our considered national policy position for targeted and localized responses to manage cluster outbreaks or suspected community transmission.

The STAGE 1 lockdown of the Erongo region will lapse at midnight tonight, Monday 22nd June 2020. The remaining 13 regions are due to migrate from STAGE 3 to STAGE 4 at midnight on Monday 29 June 2020 (next week).

I will now proceed to highlight key measures that will become applicable for the Erongo region, from midnight tonight, Monday 22 June 2020:

1. Mindful of the adverse effects caused by the full lockdown on business, households and livelihoods and considering the regions' capacity to respond to rising numbers of infection, the Erongo region will migrate from STAGE 1 to STAGE 3 at midnight tonight, Monday 22 June 2020 until midnight on Monday 06 July 2020, for an initial period of 14 days or one-incubation cycle.

2. Travel between towns in the Erongo region and to the rest of the country, will be permitted, with exception of the Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Arandis Local Authority Areas.

Considering the linkages and movement of labour between the towns of Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Arandis, travel between these Local Authority Areas will be permitted. However travel into and out of these Local Authority Areas to the rest of the country is highly discouraged and will be restricted to emergency situations only, as defined in the Regulations. Bearing in mind that the disease does not move by itself but through human carriers, all residents are strongly urged to avoid unnecessary travel during this period, and allow authorities to conduct the active case search at these towns, in an effort to determine the extent of spread of disease into the community.

3. Essential service providers as defined in the Regulations and truck drivers will be permitted to travel into and out of the region on the basis of an authorized permit. To avoid local truck drivers mixing with cross-border truck drivers, the Ministry of Urban and Rural Development in conjunction with the Ministry of Health and Social Services are directed to identify separate Truck Ports and parking areas at Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Arandis Local Authority Areas. Local truck drivers are to be escorted by law enforcement officials to and from their respective delivery destinations.
4. Public gatherings at Erongo region will be restricted to 50 persons with exception of Walvis Bay, Swakopmund & Arandis Local Authority Areas, which will be restricted to gatherings of 10 persons.

5. Education: Schools across the Erongo region that meet the 'COVID-19 Compliance Standards' may resume face-to-face instruction for Grade 11 and 12.

For Walvis Bay, Swakopmund and Arandis Local Authority Areas, the resumption of Grades 11, 12, and Pre-Primary (Grades Zero to 3) remains suspended for the next 14 days. Face-to-face instruction will be determined pending observation of the unfolding situation in those towns.

6. Vulnerable persons, in categories as defined, will be permitted to work from home at Erongo region subject to authorization issued by the Employer and upon presentation of a valid Medical Certificate. Old Age Homes should remain under isolation and caregivers should strictly adhere to the Health & Hygiene Protocols.

As I conclude the Erongo specific response, I reiterate that it has been a complex undertaking to draw a balance between protecting lives and supporting livelihoods. Government's approach - to further relax national restrictions under STAGE 4 – aims to boost social and economic activities, while continuing to advocate for intensified public adherence to Health & Hygiene Protocols, so as to safeguard our successes. We have added an additional STAGE 5, estimated from 18 September 2020, to address exclusively the opening of Points of Entry and the resumption of Air Travel.

Fellow Namibians,

I hereby announce the following measures that will apply to all residents across 13 regions of the country:

1. Namibia will migrate from STAGE 3 to STAGE 4 with Relaxed Precautions on 30 June to 17 September 2020 for an extended 10-week period.
2. Points of entry will remain closed except for the transportation of imported goods. Government in collaboration with the Tourism and Hospitality sector will conduct a targeted International Tourism revival initiative between 15 July to 15 August 2020. This initiative will look to accommodate a limited number of tourists, who will be determined in consultation with the private sector, from a carefully selected low risk market that has potential to contribute towards our tourism sector that employs over 100,000 Namibians. Modalities for this initiative will be announced in coming weeks and this trial will inform and strengthen public sector preparations for the imminent reopening of Points of Entry under STAGE 5.
3. Travel related quarantine: As from 30 June 2020, all Namibians & Non-Namibians entering the country must submit to a COVID19 PCR test on arrival and mandatory, Government supervised Quarantine, at own cost. Only citizens who cannot afford to quarantine at own cost (as will be defined in the Directives) can apply to be quarantined at cost to Government.
4. The size of public gatherings will increase to 250 people for social gatherings including weddings, funerals and religious gatherings. Members of the public must strictly adhere to the Health & Hygiene protocols.
5. Education: The resumption of Pre-Primary (Grades Zero to 3) is hereby deferred for a period of two-weeks across all 14 regions, until Monday 06 July 2020. The Ministry of Education will provide an updated schedule to the public.

Government's risk mitigation strategy for the resumption of face-to-face schooling is consistent with guidelines prescribed by the World Health Organisation. In the event a pupil or staff member presents COVID-19 related

symptoms or tests positive, the school will be suspended for a period of 14-days and traced contacts will be placed under Quarantine.

I wish to make use of this opportunity to reassure parents and guardians, who are understandably anxious about the decision to send their children back to school during a time of great uncertainty. According to the evidence before us, the consequences of not resuming learning following a long disruption to the academic calendar can have lasting and undesirable consequences on the academic progression of our children. I also emphasize that the return of learners to class, is voluntary. Parents may decide to keep their children home and assume responsibility for home schooling. Our schools should therefore not employ coercive or punitive measures against parents who decide not to initially resume face-to-face instruction.

6. Government will continue to strengthen public health response measures through Surveillance, Testing, Contact Tracing and Isolation of confirmed cases, and by intensifying public education.

In conclusion,

As I have repeatedly stated on a number of occasions, the lives of Namibians, is our greatest priority. However, in our quest to protect lives today and tomorrow, we must safeguard our economy, by mitigating the negative impacts of COVID-19 related restrictions. It is for these reasons, under STAGE 4, measures have been further relaxed to facilitate social and economic activities.

While COVID-19 may remain in our midst and in our communities for the foreseeable future, we must do everything to keep it out of our homes and out of our lives, by applying strict Health and Hygiene precautions. Personal responsibility and vigilance are ever more important under this stage of Relaxed

Precaution. By wearing a mask, washing your hands and practicing social distancing you are contributing greatly to our fight against COVID-19.

Our collective endurance is being tested and we must summon the strength to persevere. There is no need to play the blame game. Let us hold hands and fight this invisible enemy.

Thank You.