



**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

PRESS BRIEFING ON COVID-19 AND ADDITIONAL PREVENTIVE AND CONTROL MEASURES

Tuesday, 17 March 2020. Lusaka.

Members of the Press, countrymen and women, ladies and gentlemen;

Thank you for spending your precious time to come and get updated on a disease of international public health concern, the Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19).

The ongoing COVID-19 global outbreak has now spread to at-least 162 countries and territories around the world. In addition one international conveyance, the Diamond Princess, a Japanese cruise ship was affected. The risk of virus spread continues to be **Very High** globally.

As of today 17th March 2020 06:00AM SAT, **181,335** cases and **7,130** deaths have been recorded globally; with a daily increase of over 10,000. Of recent concern to us is the rate of spread in Africa. Since the first case in February 2020, the numbers have escalated to **322 cases and 10 deaths**, according to reports by 17th March 2020 06:00AM SAT.

Zambia has not yet confirmed any case of COVID-19 but continues to pitch very high, public health security for the country. The Government of the Republic of Zambia under the leadership of His Excellency Dr Edgar Chagwa Lungu has escalated the level of preparedness and put in place intense measures to respond to any event of coronavirus disease:

1. The screening process coordinated by our disease intelligence wing, the Zambia national Public health Institute at points of entry is mandatory and more rigorous.

In line with the **Public Health Act Cap. 295 of the Laws of Zambia**, and guided by the two Statutory Instruments, **SI 21 of 2020 which designates COVID-19 as a notifiable disease** and **SI 22 of 2020 which provides additional regulations to facilitate management and control of COVID-19** both issued on March 14th of 2020, mandatory screening and quarantine of international travelers including air travel passengers, truckers, bus operators, and passengers at

points of entry, bus stations and other check points from high-risk areas for a minimum period of 14 days shall be issued.

2. A restriction has been imposed on all foreign travel, with the public being advised to reschedule all avoidable travel. Hygiene practices to promote infection prevention in all passenger vehicles, aeroplanes, marine transport, and other conveyances, and points of entry such as airports, harbours, railway stations and ground crossings is emphasised.
3. For persons who may have already entered the country but were advised to self-quarantine as were not displaying symptoms at the time, it is **mandatory to report** of all individuals suspected to have COVID-19 to health officials; this applies even to those who may not have travelled but are displaying symptoms of the disease which include fever
4. We are restricting public mass gathering and social distancing mandated to prevent infections. Organisations within country have been requested to reschedule public events or use technology to advance their agenda. We are engaging the Ministries of Education and Higher Education to consider bringing forward closing dates.
5. Personal and environmental hygiene is key in prevention of COVID-19; in this regard all public places including shopping malls, markets and other trading places, restaurants, bars, bus stations, places of worship, schools, offices, and other congregate settings are mandated to ensure cleaning of surroundings and proper management of waste. Further, the public places MUST provide adequate and accessible facilities for hand hygiene and sanitation, failure to which they risk being closed.
6. The Ministry of Health is engaging various community leaders including the religious and traditional leaders to promote community sensitisation and health education.
7. A multisectoral approach to implementing prevention practices and managing a response are in Place. Following the setup of an Emergency Response Fund with K57 million from Government treasury, many stakeholders have come on board to support the activities of the COVID-10 contingency emergency plan.

Members of the Press, ladies and gentlemen, countrymen and women,

I note with concern a lot of misinformation on the COVID-19; this has exacerbated fear and stigmatisation leaving the unknowledgeable, unprotected and vulnerable. Allow me to emphasise that knowing the facts is key to being properly prepared and protecting yourself and your loved ones.

I implore you to take advantage of official information to guide your actions. A Call Centre has been established for the public to report concerns and also receive information on the disease. Dedicated Call Centre numbers are 909 (toll-free), 0953898941, 0964638726 and 0974493553.

Countrymen and women,

I wish to reiterate and emphasise that we all need to exercise high levels of hygiene and comply with these measures which are aimed at safeguarding the health of the Zambian public. Health inspectors and authorized officers shall from time-to-time visit public premises to ensure compliance and enforce these regulations.

Failure to comply with the regulations shall constitute an offence and is liable, upon conviction, to penalties stipulated in the regulations.

God Bless Zambia. I thank you.

Hon. Dr Chitalu Chilufya MP,MCC
Minister of Health