Republic of Zambia
Ministry of Health

STATEMENT ON COVID-19 IN ZAMBIA
LUSAKA (Sunday 28th November 2021)

Members of the press,

Zambia is currently experiencing a decrease in the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases with a consistent test positivity of less than 1% for the past 3 months. We also note a reduction in the number of people admitted to health facilities and deaths due to COVID-19. Of note is the number of people vaccinated have also increased from 3% to over 8% in the last two months. This is encouraging but more work needs to be done to get more people to be vaccinated. As government we are doing everything possible to increase the numbers.

Before I update you on the current situation and public health measures that Government has put in place to avert the risk of the fourth wave and the threat of the new variant Omicron, allow me to remind you of the global burden of COVID-19.

In the last 24 hours, 483,031 new cases including 5,959 new deaths were reported among 221 countries and territories. The highest burden of new cases in the last 24 hours were recorded in Europe (70%), followed by Asia (18%), North America (6%) and South America (4%). Africa accounts for 1.2% of new cases in the last 24 hours.

Back home, in the last 24 hours Zambia reports five (5) new COVID-19 cases, 15 recoveries, and zero (0) COVID-19 related deaths. The 5 new confirmed COVID-19 cases were detected from 2,798 tests, representing a positivity of 0.2% nationally. The new cases were recorded during routine screening (3), pre-travel screening (1) and healthcare facility screening (1).

The provincial distribution of the new cases and within province positivity is as follows: Central 0 out of 109 tests; Copperbelt 1, Eastern 0 out of 168 tests; Luapula 1, Lusaka 1, Muchinga 0 out of 181 tests done. Northern 0 out of 55 tests, North-western 2, Southern 0 out of 510 tests and Western 0 out of 111 tests done. The cases reported were from the following districts; Kasempa (2), Lusaka, Kitwe, and Chifunabuli 1 case each.
The cumulative number of confirmed cases recorded to date now stands at 210,143, including 3,667 deaths.

**Members of the press**

The World Health Organisation (WHO) has announced the emergence of a new COVID-19 Variant of Concern (VOC) now called Omicron. As such, countries are asked to enhance surveillance and sequencing efforts to better understand circulating SARS-CoV-2 variants.

In this regard, it is imperative that public health measures be heightened to avert the risk of Zambia experiencing another wave of COVID-19. A fourth wave would overwhelm our health systems. The Government of the Republic of Zambia, through the leadership of His Excellency Mr Hakainde Hichilema convened the Council of Ministers on Epidemics and Disaster management, which was chaired by Her Honour the Vice President of the Republic of Zambia Mrs W.K. Mutale Nalumango.

In order to address the threat of the new variant Omicron and to prevent the advent of a possible eminent fourth wave, Government has taken the following public health measures that will come into effect on Tuesday, 30th November 2021:

1. Surveillance at all points of entry will be heightened. Both testing for sars-cov-2 and vaccination will be conducted. These are airports, road border ports, sea entry points and illegal entry points.

2. All travellers coming from high-risk countries will be quarantined for 10 days in designated places, at own cost.

3. Local authorities and the Police Service to continue inspection of all public places for adherence to public health measures for covid-19 control; they will also ensure that the public places are fumigated frequently.

4. Public transport operators must ensure masking up, hand sanitizing and physical distancing by restricting the number of passengers in respect of the bus size; operators to regularly sanitize their buses.

5. Markets and bus stations not to allow anyone in the markets or bus stations without wearing a mask. All the marketeers and shop owners are expected to wear masks and provide sanitation facilities at all times.

6. Members of the public shall not be allowed into public places without masks.
7. It will be a requirement for all persons to provide evidence of vaccination before entry into government buildings.

8. It will be a requirement for Civil and public servants to be vaccinated for them to be admitted at work. This shall be done in consultation with the unions.

9. Churches to only meet three times a week but for only one hour each time they meet. Government will continue to monitor the churches and religious gatherings for adherence to the guidelines of allowing three times gatherings in a week; subject to clearance by the local authorities and the ministry of health.

10. Funerals and weddings should only accommodate less than 50 people, subjected to approval by health authorities

11. All bars, taverns, restaurants, night clubs, cinemas, casinos and stadia should ensure adherence to public health measures such as wearing masks at all times, regular hand washing/sanitizing and physical distancing. However, all bars, night clubs, discos shall operate only for limited hours from 18hrs to 20hrs and four (4) times a week. This is to enable the premise owners to clean and disinfect the facilities.

12. Colleges and universities to increasingly conduct online lessons as may be required as per case

13. Government will Roll out and upscale national wide vaccination for 2 million people by Christmas 2021 using areas of mass gatherings (markets, shopping malls, sports stadia)

All these measures are for a period of one month and will be subject to review. More measures shall be announced as the situation unfolds. In order to safeguard the lives of the public, the Zambia Police will apply the Cyber Crime Law against anyone spreading misinformation on this serious life and death situation. Members of the public must verify with the relevant authorities before sharing or circulating COVID-19 messages on social media platforms. Together we can end all pandemics.

God bless you all.

Hon. Sylvia T. Masebo, MP
Minister of Health