



**REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA
MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

**PRESS STATEMENT ON COVID-19 AND ADDITIONAL PREVENTIVE AND
CONTROL MEASURES INTRODUCED BY THE GOVERNMENT OF THE
REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA**

Issued by

**Hon. Dr. Chitalu Chilufya, MP, MCC
MINISTER OF HEALTH**

14th March 2020

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Ladies and Gentlemen; Countrymen and women; Members of the Press.

Today I wish to update the nation on the ongoing Coronavirus 2019 (COVID-19) outbreak, and measures the Government of the Republic of Zambia is upscaling to enhance our preparedness, surveillance and response to this threat.

As you may be aware, COVID-19 was first reported on 31st December 2019 in Wuhan City of Hubei Province in China. On 30th January 2020 the outbreak was declared a Global Public Health Emergency by the World Health Organization (WHO). Following wide and continued spread of the virus around the world, the outbreak has in the last few days been upgraded to pandemic status. However, the WHO still implores countries to step up efforts for containing spread of the virus by implementing strong measures to support early disease detection, isolation and supportive treatment of cases, contact tracing and interruption of disease transmission. The risk of COVID-19 spread has been determined to be **Very High** globally. Key symptoms of COVID-19 include fever, cough, sneezing, difficulties in breathing, body weakness, sore throat, and headache.

As at 13th March 2020 confirmed cases globally were 134,787 including 4,984 deaths. Cumulative cases in China alone stand at 80,814. However, there has been a marked slowdown in new cases in China over the past week, while in other countries cases continue to rise sharply. Notably, the number of cases has been increasing rapidly in Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, France, Germany, the USA and several European countries.

Within Africa 156 cases including 3 deaths have been reported in 15 countries from all subregions.

Zambia has not recorded any case of COVID-19. However, our disease intelligence arm, the Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPHI), has been conducting surveillance and to date 28 alerts involving individuals who travelled from areas with confirmed COVID-19 cases have been investigated. Beyond these, more than 29,000 passengers have been screened at our international airports in the past one month. Of these, 2,300 travelers arriving from high-risk areas have been identified and are being tracked for 14 days.

The Government through the Ministry of Health, with support from Cooperating Partners, has been implementing the following interventions:

1. The National Public Health Emergency Operations Center (PHEOC) located at the ZNPHI is activated and is using a multisectoral Incident Management System (IMS) approach to coordinate preparedness, surveillance and response efforts at technical level.
2. Active surveillance is ongoing at points of entry and in healthcare facilities. All international passengers are being screened and those from high risk countries followed up for 14 days.
3. Isolation facilities to safely manage cases and limit spread of disease have been designated at district level across the country.
4. Laboratory testing capacity for COVID-19 has been established at the University Teaching Hospital Virology Laboratory and at the School of Veterinary Medicine at the University of Zambia.
5. Infection prevention and control measures are being strengthened, with procurement of disinfectants and Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including gloves, face masks, aprons and hand hygiene supplies.
6. Community engagement through radio, TV, and social media platforms, and distribution of Information Education and Communication (IEC) materials is ongoing. Parliamentarians have also been engaged to facilitate and promote community awareness in their constituencies.

7. 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.
8. Specialized training for key healthcare workers and surge staff including immigration, customs, defense, security and point of entry personnel is being rolled out countrywide. Guidelines for various aspects of preparedness and response have been developed and distributed to health facilities, including the private sector.
9. The Government of the Republic of Zambia has established an Emergency Fund to provide resources for COVID-19 preparedness, surveillance and response.

Countrymen and Women,

I now wish to draw your attention to additional prevention and control measures the Government has introduced to enhance our preparedness, surveillance and response to the imminent threat of COVID-19.

In line with the Public Health Act Cap. 295 of the Laws of Zambia, I have signed and brought into force two Statutory Instruments which: (1) designate COVID-19 as a notifiable disease, and (2) provide additional regulations to facilitate management and control of COVID-19.

Key measures brought into force with immediate effect include:

- Mandatory reporting of all individuals suspected to have COVID-19 to health officials.
- Mandatory quarantine of all travelers from high-risk areas for a minimum period of 14 days.
- Mandatory isolation of all suspected and confirmed cases of COVID-19.

- Mandatory collection of all relevant specimens for diagnosis and management of COVID-19.
- Closure of any premises that pose a public health threat linked to COVID-19.
- A mandatory requirement for the provision of adequate and accessible facilities for hand hygiene at all public places including shopping malls, markets and other trading places, restaurants, bars, bus stations, places of worship, schools, offices, and other congregate settings. Hand hygiene facilities should include soap and running water, or alcohol-based hand sanitisers.
- A requirement for all public places including schools and training institutions, shopping malls, markets, trading places, restaurants, bars, bus stations, places of worship, and other congregate settings to adhere to and practice high levels of hygiene standards, including ensuring the provision of adequate water and sanitation facilities.
- School authorities, leaders of religious institutions, employers and community leaders are required to disseminate information on health practices, including for the prevention of COVID-19, to their constituents.
- Restriction of close personal contact such as handshakes and hugs, particularly in congregate settings such as schools, offices, places of worship, and others.
- Social distancing of at least one meter is encouraged when an individual is showing respiratory symptoms such as cough and/or sneezing. Individuals showing such symptoms are urged to stay at home and avoid interacting with the public.
- Restriction of unnecessary public gatherings.
- Restriction of non-essential foreign travel.
- Mandatory cleaning of surroundings and proper management of waste within communities, trading places, and other public places.

- Mandatory screening of international travelers including truckers, bus operators, and passengers at points of entry, bus stations and other check points that may be set up from time to time.
- Authorities at all points of entry, including airports, harbours, railway stations and ground crossings are required to put in place all necessary provisions to promote hygiene and facilitate infection prevention and control during passenger transit and transfer.
- Operators of passenger vehicles, aeroplanes, marine transport, and other conveyances are required to put in place all necessary provisions to promote hygiene and facilitate infection prevention and control during operations. This includes provision of health information on COVID-19 and other health matters. In addition, transport operators are required to submit all relevant information and documentation that may be useful in detection and management of COVID-19.

Countrymen and women,

I wish to appeal to all citizens to exercise high levels of hygiene and comply with these measures which are aimed at safeguarding the health and wellbeing 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 individuals shall be liable, upon conviction, to penalties stipulated in the regulations.

God Bless Zambia. I thank you.