

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB

ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 33rd COVID-19 PUBLIC BRIEFING ON THE NATIONAL
RESPONSE MEASURES

13 AUGUST 2021

WINDHOEK

Checked Against Delivery

Good morning, fellow Namibians.

The past several months have been profoundly sobering and difficult for our country. They have also demonstrated the courage and bravery of our people in the face of a deadly threat. This has been a period of struggle and strife, as families and communities grapple to cope with the onslaught of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, despite the tremendous challenges and losses encountered, we have persevered and shown that through joint action and common purpose, no challenge is insurmountable. We shall and must win, as a united people.

Since the onset of a deadly and devastating third wave of COVID-19 during mid-May 2021, the last 14-day observance period has offered our Nation some respite. The incidence curve is now showing a downward trajectory, with the number of new infections, hospitalizations and deaths, steadily declining.

The positivity ratio has declined significantly from 28 percent to 15 percent over the last two-week period. We are emboldened by the signs of hope that are now evident around us. This shows that we can turn the tide and overcome the worst that this pandemic brought to our country. We must do all that we can to sustain this positive trajectory.

Cumulative infections in the country now stand at one-hundred-and-twenty-two-thousand-and-ninety-seven (122,097), with a national Recovery Rate of 91 percent and a case fatality rate of 2.7 percent. With a 52 percent reduction in new cases countrywide, we are pleased to record more recoveries than new infections, with 15,188 recoveries recorded over the last two-week period. This is a clear sign of effective suppression of the transmission of new infections. The number of deaths due to COVID-19 and related illnesses, have also declined over the period from 500 to 205 deaths. We are hurt and regret this loss of life. One Namibian life lost, is one life too many.

Generally, a decline in new infections has been recorded across the country over the period, with the steepest reductions recorded in the Khomas, Otjozondjupa and Erongo regions. Similarly, case fatality declined by 59 percent across all regions, with exception of the Zambezi region which recorded an increase in fatalities of 29%. The Omaheke region, although it marginally declined in deaths over the period, continues to account for the highest case fatality rate at 6.7 percent, three times national average.

While this current pattern suggests that the mitigating measures are achieving a measure of success, the old adage remains true – prevention is better than cure. Let us therefore not drop our guard, but proceed with cautious optimism and remain vigilant.

Our individual and collective behaviour in the coming few weeks will determine whether we secure these gains, or cause a reversal. We do not want to go back and experience the devastation we have endured over the past few months. We must aim to progress and to advance towards restored health, life and a robust economy. We will achieve this if we continue to adhere to the Public Health Regulations and preventative measures of social and physical distancing, correct wearing of face masks, practicing safe hand hygiene and getting fully vaccinated. These are the most effective methods and tools to defeating this invisible enemy.

With regard to vaccine coverage, the national vaccination rate for persons fully vaccinated, has increased from 1.8 percent two-weeks ago, to 2.7 percent vaccine coverage today. Those who received the first dose have increased from 6.1 percent to 7.1 percent, over the same period. A total of seventy-one-thousand-one-hundred-and-fifty-eight (71,158) Namibians are now fully vaccinated. At the current absorption rate of approximately 3,250 doses administered daily, we are falling behind in reaching our herd immunity target of vaccinating 1,5 million eligible Namibians or 60 percent of the population, by 31 March 2022. These targets will not be realized without the full cooperation of the public. I therefore reiterate my call for all eligible Namibians to get fully vaccinated.

The arrival of the AstraZeneca vaccine last week, a timely donation from the Kingdom of the Netherlands, has contributed significantly to this sharp rise in the number of fully vaccinated persons in the country. On 12 August alone a total of 7,622 vaccines doses were administered. I express sincere appreciation to the friendly nations and organisations who have demonstrated solidarity and generosity in our nation's hour of greatest need. As I have often stated, no nation in the world will be safe from COVID-19 until all nations have defeated the disease.

The private sector continues to contribute towards the national COVID-19 response and preparedness. For example, in the latest procurement of SINOPHARM vaccine, the Government paid for the procured consignment of 250,000 doses. However, under the "Vaccine for HOPE coalition", a private sector initiative, led by FNB Namibia, the private sector facilitated and paid for the shipment of the vaccine to Namibia at a cost of 1.3 million Namibian Dollars. They are, in no particular order: Hollard Namibia, Ninety-One, Allan Gray, Liberty Life, Old Mutual, Stanlib, FirstRand, NamibRe, NASRIA, Santam, Momentum, FP du Toit Transport and Meinzies Airport Logistics.

Thank you for joining hands with the Government to safeguard Namibian lives. We are equally grateful to other private sector entities that continue to support and contribute so generously to the fight against the pandemic in different ways.

Fellow Namibians,

The current Public Health Regulations will expire at midnight tomorrow, Saturday 14 August 2021. After the review of the current COVID-19 public health measures, some adjustments were proposed and the following Regulations will come into force, for an extended period of thirty-one (31) days from Sunday, 15 August 2021 until midnight, Tuesday, 14 September 2021.

1. Public Gatherings as defined in the Regulations have been adjusted to one hundred (100) persons per event.
2. The Curfew will remain in force from 22h00 to 04h00 daily.
3. Education: All schools and educational institutions will operate at full capacity, with strengthened Infection Prevention and Control measures in place.
4. Restrictions related to liquor:
 - a. The sale of liquor remains restricted, on take-away basis between 09h00 to 18h00, Monday to Friday, except for those hospitality establishments that have resident guests.
 - b. The sale of alcohol remains prohibited on Saturday to Sunday, except at restaurants, guesthouses and similar establishments with resident guests. On-site consumption of alcohol is allowed with meals at restaurants until 22:00.
5. Business operations:
 - a. Gyms, Nightclubs, Casinos, Gambling and Betting Houses may resume operations, allowing patrons up to half capacity.

The number of persons inside a facility may not exceed 50 percent floor carrying capacity or 100 persons at any one time.

- b. All Contact Sports may resume, however without spectators. Management of the various sports codes must ensure the safety of sports persons and staff, during training and games.
 - c. Motor Vehicle Passenger Restrictions remain in force, loading public transport vehicles at half capacity. Vehicles that are transporting tour groups who are travelling together may load such tourists at full capacity.
6. Burials: due to COVID-19 must take place within a period of ten (10) days, all the current burial related regulations remain in force. The number of 100 persons per gathering applies to mourners, excluding essential workers.
7. With regard to the test results upon entry into the country, the Minister will elaborate on technicalities.

Fellow Namibians,

The effect that the war on COVID-19 has had on the collective psyche of the nation is profound. Lives have been lost, families thrown into despair, dreams shattered and communities left in disarray. The road towards recovery will be long but together, one step at a time, we will get there. This is a marathon that demands our collective endurance. Our desire to return to normalcy must be matched by our commitment to adhere to measures and achieve a high vaccination rate.

Over the past several months, many Namibians have worked tirelessly and sacrificed a great deal in order to steer the country towards victory. Let us ensure that the efforts of these brave and committed patriots have not been in vain. I have the utmost confidence that as a nation, we have the courage to wage an enduring battle and overcome this unprecedented challenge.

I commend the perseverance of Namibians from all walks of life and thank you all for your cooperation. Let us continue to hold hands, pulling in the same direction until our mission to defeat COVID-19 is accomplished.

I now call upon the Ministers of Health and Social Services; Justice; Education and the Attorney General to elaborate on the technical aspects.

God Bless the Republic of Namibia.