

Telephone: +263-4-798537-60

Telegraphic Address:

“MEDICUS”, Harare

Fax: +263-4-729154/793634
(702293 FHP)

Telex: MEDICUS 22211ZW



Reference:

Ministry of Health and Child Care
P O Box CY1122
Causeway
HARARE

PRESS STATEMENT, TO BE HELD ON 15 JANUARY 2021,
BY THE VICE PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF ZIMBABWE
AND MINISTER OF HEALTH, HONOURABLE GENERAL
(RETIRED) DR. C. G. D. N. CHIWENGA 'GCZM'

SALUTATION

- My fellow citizens,
- Ladies and Gentlemen,
- Members of the Press,
- I hope I find you well in this existential threat of the **COVID 19** pandemic

In as much as COVID 19 is affecting the whole world, Zimbabwe is also a victim of the devastating pandemic. As of **14 January 2021**,

we recorded a cumulative total of **twenty five thousand three hundred and sixty-eight (25 368)** Confirmed Cases, **fourteen thousand seven hundred and fourteen (14 714)** Recoveries and **one thousand one hundred and twelve (1112)** Active cases, while a total of **forty-seven (47)** people lost their lives, yesterday. Hitherto, Zimbabwe has a total of **six hundred and thirty-six (636)** COVID 19-inspired deaths. ***'Let's observe a moment of silence for our departed beloved ones, friends and relatives.'***

A detailed Summary of COVID-19 Statistics spanning from 24 December to date is indicated below:

In response to the current spike of COVID 19 cases, the Government introduced a raft of measures which include:

- a. The Inter-ministerial National COVID 19 Taskforce continued to review the situation on a daily basis.
- b. The Ministry of Health and Child Care and strategic Partners stepped up Awareness Programs across all media.

- c. Imposed a **30-Day** National Lockdown.
- d. Revitalised Testing, Contact Tracing and Treatment of patients.
- e. Mobilise and provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) to our frontline workers.

Let me acknowledge that *'Pandemics affect individuals, societies and states in their entirety and that no one is impervious to the threat.'* Admittedly, some of our Health Workers were infected by COVID 19, while others sadly *'answered a sunset call.'* May their Dearest Souls Rest In Internal Peace. Government continues to mobilise **PPEs** to minimize the risk that our frontline workers are exposed to, in their selfless dedication to save lives.

It would be however, an exaggeration at this stage, to suggest that our Health institutions are overwhelmed by cases of COVID 19. Admittedly, the recent escalation of cases of the pandemic in the country caused a high demand for health care. Nonetheless, let me

reassure citizens that Zimbabwe's public and private health institutions still have adequate capacity to offer health services to all patients.

It is also well-documented that among the Active Cases recorded so far:

- **Two (02) to three (03) percent** warranted hospitalization with specialized treatment,
- At least **twelve (12) to thirteen (13) percent** required discharge within **two (02) to three (3) days** of admission,
- While the bulk of **Eighty Five (85) percent** only required self-isolation.

Some administrative issues that posed a gridlock in the smooth admission of COVID 19 patients in our hospitals have since been resolved. Among them was, Government's extension of COVID 19 Allowances to incentivize our Health care workers, frontline workers, civil servants and vulnerable members of our society, and provision of **PPEs**.

'My fellow citizens'

In light of widely circulating reports alleging that there is a serious deficit of hospital beds, let me point out that these were ***'embellished social media allegations by some pen-mercenaries.'*** However, if the need arises in future, my Ministry may consider options of **increasing facilities currently designated for COVID 19** or **designate more hospitals to take in patients**. In a worst case scenario, that has so far not manifested, **all hospitals in the country may be directed to take in citizens affected by COVID 19**. In my capacity as your Minister of Health and Child Care, I want to take this opportunity to urge our beloved citizens not to panic and that they should rely on official information.

I am also aware that some of our citizens are anxious to get vaccinated. The Government is following the development and dissemination of COVID 19 vaccines by other states, with keen

interest. Despite the observations made that other African, European and Asian countries had started rolling out vaccines, Zimbabwe adopted a measured approach, with experts interrogating all safety concerns. As soon as all technical and administrative obligations are met, Zimbabweans can expect to be vaccinated. The vaccination is going to be voluntary. Let me underscore that my Ministry is doing everything possible to ensure that our citizens are safe from possible side effects of some COVID 19 vaccines, currently on the shelf.

'Ladies and Gentlemen'

There might not be any need of extending the **30-day National Lockdown** if the progression of the pandemic is tamed. However, let me warn my fellow countrymen that current statistics is indicating a marginal increase in new cases. The total Confirmed Cases continued to mount. The prevailing situation is posing a grave threat to public health as denoted by a summary of figures contained in the table:

Our citizens should not **slacken**. We should continue to observe guidelines of **wearing masks, observing social distance** and **sanitization**.

It is unfortunate that some of our people continued to defy lockdown measures, as we might have noticed in Mbare, where some errand youths decided, in their own wisdom or lack of it, to organize a musical showcase. If all our people maintained a positive attitude towards measures to combat the CORONA Virus, there was not going to be any need for imposition of a National Lockdown. I am aware that lockdown measures do hurt the socio-economic livelihoods, freedoms, rights and liberties of individuals. Nevertheless, they may be necessary if some of our citizens display nonchalant behavior. **Honestly, would you require Security Forces to persuade you to conform to some of these basic guidelines?** We are not interested in arresting our people, therefore I urge you to reawaken internal discipline.

'My fellow countrymen'

The National COVID 19 Taskforce will also continue discharging a critical function of **information-sharing through deliberate**

Awareness Campaign programmes. The Awareness Programmes are fashioned in all languages and are widely disseminated through all media platforms and Government structures. The National COVID 19 Taskforce coordinates its efforts through Resident Ministers in every Province, who ensure that information is cascaded to District, Ward and Village levels. Government is also mobilizing traditional and church leaders among other opinion leaders to conscientise citizens on the effects of the deadly pandemic.

I am informed of concerns by some members of the general public who want to know if Zimbabwe has enough **Testing Machines?** Testing is an important strategy to contain or slow the progression of the pandemic in society. I am however, yet to come across a country or society on this planet, which claims to be having adequate Testing Equipment. Nevertheless, Government is seized with the requirement to further enhance our Testing Capacity. Currently, we have a capacity of testing at least **Six Thousand (6 000) people per day.**

'Ladies and Gentlemen'

I have chosen not to belabour you with statistics of the spread of the CORONA Virus across the continent of Africa. As your Minister of Health and Child Care, I want to remain focused on finding safe and durable solutions to prevent the scourge from claiming a huge toll of casualties in Zimbabwe. I admit that, when Zimbabwe wins the battle against the scourge, researches into the trends can be conducted in earnest.

Before I conclude my Press Statement, someone asked me whether traditional medicines such as **Mufandichimuka, Moringa, Zumbani** and other herbs can be used to treat COVID 19 or substitute drugs for COVID 19? Some **Traditional Doctors** were said to claiming that their patients recovered after administering herbs. My comment would be that, you might be aware that some modern medicines are actually derived from traditional herbs. Yes, it is possible that some traditional medicines can be used to treat COVID 19 however, there is need for scientific researches to be done to ascertain their efficacy. The Ministry of Health and Child Care actually operationalized the Traditional Medicines Department, which is pre-occupied with researches in this area.

MASK UP!

SANITISE and
OBSERVE SOCIAL DISTANCING
I THANK YOU!