

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



THE PRESIDENCY

STATEMENT BY

**HIS EXCELLENCY DR. HAGE G. GEINGOB,
PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA**

**ON THE OCCASSION OF THE 41ST COVID-19 PUBLIC BRIEFING
ON THE NATIONAL RESPONSE MEASURES**

15 March 2022

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery.*

Fellow Namibians,

Good afternoon and welcome to the 41st COVID-19 Public Briefing.

The COVID-19 pandemic is evolving. Recently, classification of the outbreak has been adjusted by the World Health Organisation from a pandemic to an endemic disease. In Namibia, the recovery rate from COVID-19 now stands at 97 percent, with a Case Fatality Rate of 2,5 percent. Statistics further indicate that at 14 March 2022, the active cases stand at 222. As the nation may recall, there was a time when the active cases in the country were much higher last year, peaking at an all-time high of twenty-seven-thousand-and-forty-six (27,046) active infections in the country during July 2021.

However, the reclassification of the outbreak to endemic should not give us a false sense of security. We must continue to be vigilant and alert to further control the spread and the upsurge in new cases. The magnitude of the challenge we continue to face is large and we must be ready to mount an effective response. We still require strong measures and interventions to reduce the spread of new infections; to protect the most vulnerable members of our society and to bolster the capacity of our healthcare system so as to respond to new infections as they occur.

During the last 30-day Observance Period, the positivity ratio declined from 7 percent to 2 percent rate of new infections, from the total number of samples tested, countrywide. There has equally been a corresponding decline in deaths, with a total of 19 deaths recorded during the Period, from COVID-19 or related illnesses. One death from COVID-19 however,

is one death too many. I have been relieved lately by the daily update reports that indicated zero deaths over the past week or so.

I pay tribute to our frontline workers, particularly the healthcare workers whose valiant fight to contain spread of the disease have achieved a measure of success.

Economic data reveals that the volume of foreign tourist arrivals remain at only one third of what they were in 2019. This means that the employment-intensive tourism sector which provides direct and indirect employment to approximately 150,000 Namibians, is still in recession. Vaccination remains one of the most effective measures in our multi-faceted National Response against COVID-19. It not only reduces individual chances of developing severe illness, hospitalization and death, but can also help to restore economic activity particularly in the adversely affected tourism sector.

As of today March 15, 2022, nationally, only 21.4 percent of the country's eligible population is fully vaccinated. This is one third of the WHO recommended population coverage of 60 percent to achieve national herd immunity.

The Government has procured adequate vaccination stock and our country has also benefitted from the generosity of friendly nations, having received large consignments of donated vaccines. Such valuable and scarce resources should not be allowed to waste by expiring on our shelves. I, therefore, reiterate my call for all eligible Namibians to get

vaccinated and for those who have already received initial jabs, to get their booster shots, so as to ensure immunity does not wane, especially as we face the winter months.

The approaching winter, when people tend to be confined indoors, pose a natural risk to the spread of respiratory diseases. We must therefore remain vigilant to prevent the spread of new infection that could overwhelm our healthcare system.

Fellow Namibians,

The current Regulations are due to expire tomorrow. The following new Public Health Regulations will come into force from midnight, 16 March 2022, for a period of 30 days until 15 April 2022:

1. Wearing of masks in public place is no longer mandatory. However, people who are in close settings, such as public transport, indoor public meetings are encouraged to wear masks. Physical distance of no less than 1 meter must be maintained between persons at all times;
2. With regards to the size of Public Gatherings, for the next dispensation, the size of Public Gatherings will be adjusted from 500 to 1,000 people. This will be applicable to all social gatherings as defined in the Regulations, including weddings, funerals, church and sporting events.
3. Fully vaccinated travellers are no longer required to produce a negative PCR test result upon arrival at a Namibian Points of Entry, but are instead required to present an authentic, valid vaccination card at Point of Entry.

Fellow Namibians,

A reprieve does not mean the end of the pandemic. We must continue to care for ourselves and the vulnerable members of our society who are more susceptible, by continuing to protect ourselves so that new clusters of infection do not form. The abolishment of the mandatory face mask mandate, does not mean the abolishment of common-sense. On the contrary common-sense must continue to prevail.

The Government will continue to do its part and complete the new projects brought on stream, to ensure our public health sector is sufficiently capacitated. Let us apply good judgment at all times, in our personal and public conduct and avoid recklessness that could lead to the reversal of the many gains and successes achieved to date. We can surely overcome this pandemic by working together, as members of one house, the Namibian House.

I now invite the Minister of Health and Social Services to provide further details on the updated Regulations.

I thank you.