



## **SOUTH AFRICA'S RESPONSE TO THE CORONAVIRUS TALKING POINTS**

***Government has declared a national disaster to intensify the fight against the spread of the Coronavirus.***

- Government is undertaking extraordinary measures to combat the spread and impact of COVID-19 (coronavirus) in South Africa.
- President Cyril Ramaphosa has declared a national state of disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act.
- The declaration enables our nation to have an integrated and coordinated response to deal with the spread of the virus.
- It sets into motion our disaster management mechanism that will focus on preventing and reducing the outbreak of the virus.
- We will also be able to set up emergency, rapid and effective response systems to mitigate the severity of the impact of the virus.

***Government is effecting measures to manage the disease and protect the people of our country.***

- Schools will be closed from Wednesday, 18 March, and will remain closed until after the Easter Weekend.
- Government discourages all non-essential domestic travel, particularly by air, rail, taxis and bus.
- Government is in the process of identifying isolation and quarantine sites in each district and metro.
- Surveillance and testing systems are being strengthened at hospitals and government is partnering with the private sector to develop a tracing, tracking and monitoring system for all those affected by the coronavirus.
- A National Command Council chaired by the President will meet three times a week, to coordinate all aspects of our extraordinary emergency response.

***Restrictions on international travel are being implemented to halt the spread of the virus.***

- Travel restrictions are imposed on foreign nationals travelling from high-risk countries such as Italy, Iran, South Korea, Spain, Germany, United States, United Kingdom and China.
- South African citizens are advised to refrain from travel to or through the European Union, United States, United Kingdom and high-risk countries such as China, Iran and South Korea.
- All travellers who have entered South Africa from high-risk countries since mid-February will be required to present themselves for testing. South African

citizens returning from high-risk countries will be subjected to testing and quarantine on their return.

- High intensity screenings are being implemented for travellers from medium-risk countries such as Portugal, Japan, Hong Kong and Singapore.
- We will strengthen surveillance, screening and testing measures at OR Tambo, Cape Town and King Shaka International Airports.
- South Africa has 72 ports of entry in the country which are land, sea and air ports and of the 53 land ports, 35 will be closed from Monday, 16 March 2020. Two of the eight sea ports will be closed for passengers and crew changes.
- All international arrivals will be required to submit health and travel information in writing on a prescribed health questionnaire to ensure they are traceable and contactable.
- Effective immediately, all non-essential travel for all spheres of government outside of the Republic is prohibited.
- These new measures are in line with the World Health Organisation (WHO) prescripts and benchmarked against measures adopted by other countries.
- South Africa will regularly issue travel alerts referring to specific cities, countries or regions as the situation evolves.

***Limiting contact amongst groups of people minimises the risk of the spread of this virus.***

- Gatherings of more than 100 people are prohibited as a precaution to curb the transmission of the virus.
- All mass celebrations of upcoming National Days as well as government events are cancelled.
- There will be a suspension on visitors for all correctional services for 21 days to allow facilities to be cleaned and sanitised.
- We call on mine owners to ensure that they take all necessary measures to intensify hygiene control in hostels.
- Government calls on the management of malls and entertainments centres to bolster their hygiene control.
- Where small gatherings are unavoidable, organisers need to put in place stringent measures of prevention and control.
- Government is working closely with schools and public institutions such as parliament, prisons, police and the military to intensify hygiene control.

***Government's Integrated National Response Plan strengthens our fight against the spread of the coronavirus.***

- Government has developed an Integrated National Response Plan to combat the spread and impact of COVID-19 in South Africa.
- It sets out additional measures to safeguard South Africans and call on all sectors of society to work together in overcoming the virus.
- We will capitalise an Emergency Fund of about R1 billion to fight the spread of the virus by reallocating expenditure such as travel not be used as a result of the pandemic.
- Our additional measures intensify our response to COVID-19 following the World Health Organisation (WHO) declaring it a pandemic on 13 March 2020.

- Our response to the virus has at all times been in line with WHO guidelines which include:
  - Enhanced emergency response mechanisms;
  - Active case finding, contact tracing and monitoring; quarantine of contacts and isolation of cases;
  - The promotion of self-initiated isolation of people with mild respiratory symptoms to reduce the burden on health system;
  - Preparing for a surge in health care facility needs, including respiratory support; and
  - Implementing COVID-19 surveillance using existing respiratory disease surveillance systems and hospital based surveillance.

***We are taking decisive measures to protect the economy against the impact of the coronavirus.***

- The dramatic decline in economic activity in our major trading partners and drop in international tourism is expected to have an impact on our economy.
- Cabinet is in the process of finalising a comprehensive package of interventions to mitigate the expected impact of COVID-19 on the economy.
- It will consist of fiscal and support measures to help our economy overcome the potentially severe impact on production, the viability of businesses, job retention and job creation.
- Government will work with Development Finance Institutions to extend company debt repayment terms - conditional on firms avoiding retrenchments - to soften the economic impact of the virus on businesses.
- There are plans to engage financial sector to introduce mortgage holidays, longer debt repayment periods, debt servicing payment breaks for companies, and loosen credit extension.

***Our Integrated National Response Plan will supports workers affected by the coronavirus.***

- Government will consult social partners to develop a social compact to extend paid sick leave for workers not currently covered by sick leave provisions to maximum of three weeks.
- All workers who contract the COVID-19 at their places of employment will be supported through the Workmen's Compensation Fund and Unemployment Insurance Fund (UIF) for sick benefits.
- To further support workers, we plan to extend UIF for up to three months for registered workers who are laid off or quarantined as a result of the coronavirus.
- The Minister of Trade, Industry and Competition, Minister of Employment and Labour and Minister of Health will urgently meet with Nedlac social partners on plans to stop the spread of the virus in workplaces.
- Under the Occupational Health and Safety Act employers have a responsibility to put in place preventative measures including disinfecting facilities, especially at large factories and mines.

***Support measures will be introduced to counter food or medical supply shortages.***

- Government will closely monitor food prices and impose appropriate export restrictions if a supply shortage emerges.
- We are prepared to utilise the flexibility of the World Trade Organisation (WTO) to institute export bans for essential medical supplies.
- We are working to identify alternative suppliers for disinfectants, medical supplies, surgical masks, hospital beds, prefab-style buildings for emergency medical sites.
- There are plans to fast-track financial support to firms to increase production of medical supplies, bed linen, hospital beds, pre-fab buildings, and cleaning products required to combat the virus.
- The general hygiene measures for live animal markets, wet markets and animal product markets are being strengthened.

***Our national disaster management system activates all state resources to contain and minimise the effects of a disaster.***

- The declaration of a national state of disaster sets the legal framework to release available resources of the national government such as equipment, vehicles and facilities.
- As part of the disaster system, personnel at national government are available to render of emergency services, evacuate the population from the threatened areas and provide temporary shelters.
- It oversees the regulation of traffic, movement of persons and goods and occupancy of premises for the provision of temporary emergency accommodation within the disaster-stricken areas.
- It includes the suspension or limiting of the sale, dispensing or transportation of alcohol.
- The installation of temporary lines of communication to the dissemination of information required for dealing with the disaster.
- A national state of disaster lapses after three months after being declared or may be terminated by a notice in the Government Gazette.