



REPUBLIC OF ZAMBIA

**STATEMENT BY THE SECRETARY TO THE CABINET ON INSTITUTING
STRONG PUBLIC HEALTH MEASURES TO CURB THE ESCALATING
NUMBER OF COVID-19 CASES IN ZAMBIA**

15 June 2021

Countrymen, women and the Youth;

Zambia is currently experiencing a third wave of the COVID-19 Pandemic which started three weeks ago, and is proving to be very virulent than the two waves the country experienced earlier. This situation poses catastrophic consequences to the health and socio-economic status of our country.

The daily confirmed new cases are increasing exponentially by the day. Additionally, the number of patients presenting with severe forms of disease and the deaths we continue to record are all unprecedented.

Our COVID-19 isolation and treatment centres have reached their maximum capacity and our health personnel are creating bed space on a daily basis, a very un-sustainable situation.

As we have stated before, we need to take the fight into communities and not in our hospitals. We need to close and close tight the COVID 19 infections in our communities and this can only be achieved if we worked as a collective.

In the last three days we have seen 5,492 confirmed new cases, with today's new cases being 2,690. Similarly, there has been 79 deaths in the last three days and today alone 28 deaths were recorded. These are not statistics but our parents, grandparents, brothers and sisters, uncles and aunties and nephews and nieces among others.

Today the bed-occupancy rate in our COVID-19 Isolation and treatment facilities stands at 100% with 721 patients currently being treated for COVID-19 including 485 (67%) requiring oxygen therapy. As at today, 15 June 2021, the country has recorded the highest number of COVID-19 admissions at 195 patients; the highest number of cases; and the highest number of deaths in a single day during the third wave. At the peak of the second wave, our total in-patients due to COVID-19 stood at 520 while maximum deaths in a day stood at 32.

Countrymen, women and the Youth;

At the current rate of progression of COVID 19 cases, severe disease and deaths, we will need 1,700 beds spaces and quadrupled mortuary space, a situation we should all frown upon.

We also run the risk of completely disrupting routine essential health services which will trigger other public health emergencies in our country.

The Government of the Republic of Zambia under the able stewardship of His Excellency the President, Dr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu has been leading from the front in this response informed by the scalable COVID 19 Multisectoral Contingency Preparedness and Response Plan.

Government supported by its development partners, the United Family, Private sector and other stakeholders has continued investing in all key pillars of the response.

Arising from the grave situation we find ourselves as a result of COVID 19, Government has decided to institute strong Public health measures to curb further transmission of COVID-19 and more importantly save lives, livelihoods, schools and the economy of the country.

The following measures and restrictions are hereby introduced with immediate effect:

- 1. Heightened enforcement of Public Health Measures** by the Ministry of Home Affairs, Ministry of Transport and Communication, and Public Health inspectors under the Ministries of Local Government and Health in line with the Public Health Act No 22 of 1995 of the laws of Zambia and the Statutory Instruments No. 21, 22 and 62. Places such as markets, bus stops, Public transport, trading places, Shopping Malls, restaurants and other eating places and congregate settings are directed to comply.
2. Heightened fumigation and disinfection of public places using approved disinfectants.
- 3. No Public and Social gatherings will be held unless certified and authorised in line with the existing statutes. NB. The Electoral Commission of Zambia has already provided guidance on public rallies and roadshows.**
4. Mandatory masking. I direct the Ministry of Health and Ministry of Justice to immediately finalise the statute to facilitate enforcement and appropriate penalty.
5. Religious institutions to suspend religious activities for 1 month or use virtual platforms.

6. Heighten communication strategies related to Covid-19 at Community Level leveraging on community structures and best practices learnt from the HIV & AIDS program
7. Universities and colleges will only conduct online classes for one month and not even blended learning will be allowed.
8. The Situation in Primary and secondary schools will continue to be closely monitored using a scalable plan. Closure of schools will be on case by case basis. I direct the Ministry of Education, Ministry of Health and the Disaster management and mitigation Unit to work closely with school authorities in both Public and Private sectors and ensure that Public health measures including masking up correctly and consistently are fully adhered to. No closure or suspension of schools and / or classes respectively should be effected without guidance and approval from the Ministry of Health.
9. Restaurants and other eating places will only operate on take away basis for the next 1-month subject to review.
10. Bars, taverns and night clubs will only open from 18:00hrs to 23:00hrs from Friday to Sunday only for 1 month. This will be reviewed in the next two weeks and total closure will be considered depending on adherence and the evolution of the Pandemic.

Countrymen, women and the Youth;

It has taken Government three weeks to make these decisions not out of weakness but in trying to strike a balance between saving lives and livelihoods and protecting the economy of the country.

I am aware that some sections of our society have been calling for a lockdown. I urge all Zambians to respond positively particularly in adhering to the heightened Public health measures so that together we can return to the “new normal”

I wish to assure you that Government under His Excellency, the President, Dr. Edgar Chagwa Lungu is resolved to bringing the COVID 19 Pandemic in our country under control using a multisectoral approach.

This battle cannot be won without the full participation and engagement of every one of you. It is the responsibility of every one of us to do our part irrespective of our religious or political affiliation in ensuring that the spread of the COVID-19 is curbed.

Let us work together with unity of purpose.

Thank you and God bless you all

Dr. Simon K. Miti

SECRETARY TO THE CABINET