

# **GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI**



## **DECLARATION OF NATIONAL EMERGENCY IN RESPONSE TO CORONAVIRUS**

The Kingdom of Eswatini, like the rest of the World, is confronted by a stubborn pandemic that threatens the health and wellbeing of our Nation as it relentlessly spreads across the Globe at an alarming rate. While Eswatini has one confirmed COVID-19 case at this moment, we are seized with the responsibility to protect our citizens from a scourge which knows no boundaries and continues to unfold in an unprecedented manner and speed.

I have been commanded by His Majesty King Mswati III and Ingwenyama to invoke section 29 of the Disaster Management Act 2006, having assessed the magnitude and severity of the outbreak of the Coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic confirmed world over, to declare a State of Emergency in the Kingdom of Eswatini with immediate effect for a period not exceeding two (2) months.

As a result of this declaration, His Majesty has further commanded Government to introduce the following measures:

- Army day is suspended.
- Good Friday and Easter Services suspended
- King's Birthday celebration is cancelled. The budget set aside for the King's birthday celebration will be re-directed to the fight against the Coronavirus pandemic.
- Schools and Tertiary Institutions should be closed with immediate effect until further notice. The school calendar will be adjusted accordingly.
- Government and Parliament are to ensure that sufficient funds are made available specifically for the fight against COVID-19.
- Government is tasked to work in collaboration with Regional Administrators, Chiefs, traditional authorities and all relevant sectors to upscale the Preparedness and Response plan in communities. Security forces will be part of the COVID-19 National Emergency Response.
- A socio economic analysis on the impact of this pandemic on business will be undertaken.

The King has further commanded Government to ensure that all emaSwati students abroad and citizens in the diaspora are protected and safe from the pandemic.

The following measures will also be implemented with immediate effect;

## **Travel**

- Foreign nationals coming from COVID-19 high risk countries will be restricted from entering the country until further notice. Visas to enter Eswatini already issued to citizens of high risk countries will be revoked from 20 March 2020.
- Residents/Citizens returning from high risk countries will be subjected to intensive screening and are required to self isolate for a mandatory 14 days.
- Non essential travel to all other countries is suspended for all citizens.
- Citizens are encouraged to minimize non essential local travel.

## **Social Distancing**

- All public and private gatherings attracting 50 or more people are suspended until further notice. These include conferences, funerals, weddings, entertainment, sporting activities, etc.
- Visitation to hospitals is restricted
- Visits to Correctional Services facilities are suspended.

Government, Parastatals and Companies, including Supermarkets, Shopping Centres and all entities are urged to bolster hygiene control and to keep their workplaces safe for both workers and customers.

## **Prevention**

It is important to remind the public to follow prevention measures to mitigate the spread of the virus both at home and at work. These include:

- Keep the home environment clean and safe. Disinfect all high touch surfaces regularly and ensure proper ventilation.
- Stop shaking hands and use other none touch methods of greeting.
- Maintain a distance of at least 1 metre from each other.
- Wash hands regularly with running water and soap or use alcohol based sanitisers
- Create habits and reminders to avoid touching your face (mouth, nose, eyes) and cover coughs and sneezes.
- Take care of the vulnerable, especially senior citizens and those with underlying respiratory conditions who are more susceptible to the coronavirus infection.
- If you experience flu like symptoms (fever, difficulty breathing, cough, high temperature) visit your nearest health centre facility or call the Emergency Medical Services Toll free line 977.

Government will further strengthen monitoring, detection, testing and screening in all ports of entry including informal border crossings as well as intensify border patrols. We will activate the Unit of Volunteers providing Community Based Disaster Risk Management support at community-based level to ensure educational messages reach all EmaSwati in their communities.

In order to strengthen operational readiness to respond to the COVID-19 outbreak, the Government, WHO and partners have developed a contingency plan. Its implementation therefore requires a multisectoral approach. Government continues to upgrade this plan as the situation evolves with new developments.

### **Activities undertaken**

- On surveillance and response the Ministry of health has a toll free line **977** designated for reporting alerts of COVID-19.
- Generic messages have been adapted and disseminated through radio, posters, and leaflets. Radio programs and educative talk shows conducted through EBIS, VOC, ETV on an on-going basis. The Ministry of Health also monitors rumours and misinformation linked to COVID-19 and corrective public information circulated.
- Screening of travellers in Ports of entry continues on a daily basis as well as follow up to those at high risk. One individual who came from Italy is on quarantine and has shown no symptoms of COVID-19.
- The one positive case is managed well. Contact tracing and tests are being conducted.
- The Ministry of Health continues to train more responders at Public health and health facility levels.

### **Diagnostic capacity**

Government is working with WHO and other partners to build capacity for detection and diagnosis of coronavirus locally. A plan has been drawn and costed to install a BSL level 3 influenza laboratory at the Lubombo Referral Hospital. WHO has supported the country with technical assistance, laboratory equipment and diagnostic kits in this regard.

Once again may I assure the Nation that Government will be vigilant in implementing our emergency response plans supported by all Emaswati and our international partners, as we tackle this emerging pandemic with the hope it will soon be behind us.

**BAYETHE WENA WAPHAKATHI**  
**Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini**  
**PRIME MINISTER**

**17 March 2020**