



East African Community

JOINT STATEMENT BY THE MINISTERS RESPONSIBLE FOR HEALTH AND EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY AFFAIRS ISSUED ON 25TH MARCH 2020 ON COVID-19 PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE IN EAST AFRICAN COMMUNITY REGION

Ministers Responsible for Health and EAC Affairs met today, 25th March 2020 by Video Conference under the Chair Honorable **Dr. Daniel NGAMIJE**, Minister of Health, for the Republic of Rwanda, and Chairperson of the EAC Sectoral Council of Ministers responsible for Health. The joint meeting was attended by Minister of Health, Minister of Trade and Industry and Minister of State Ministry of Foreign Affairs and international cooperation, Republic of Rwanda; Minister of Health, Ministers responsible for EAC Affairs, Minister of Home Affairs, Minister of Works, Transport and Communication, from the United Republic of Tanzania; Minister for EAC Affairs Republic of South Sudan; Minister of State for EAC Affairs, Republic of Uganda; Cabinet Secretary Ministry of EAC and Regional Development, Republic of Kenya; Minister of Public Health and Fight against HIV/AIDS, and Minister in the office of the President responsible for EAC Affairs, Republic of Burundi;

The meeting was attended by all Minister partner the Republic of Burundi; the Republic of Kenya; the Republic of Rwanda; the Republic of South Sudan; the United Republic of Tanzania; and the Republic of Uganda. The purpose of the meeting was to share existing knowledge and information on the COVID-19 outbreak, deliberate on the COVID-19 Pandemic, map up containment strategies to stem out any further spread of the disease in the region and develop a clear plan to mitigate against impacts caused by COVID -19 pandemic in the region.

The Ministers noted that of 24th March 2020, the region has reported a total of 91 confirmed cases (Uganda: 14; Kenya: 25; Rwanda:40; and Tanzania: 12) in 4 out of the 6 Partner States. There were no confirmed cases from Republic of South Sudan and Republic of Burundi.

The Ministers commended the EAC Partner States, WHO and Africa CDC for the efforts being made towards addressing the COVID-19, and the steps taken to contain the disease and prevent further spread in the EAC region

The Ministers noted the existence of an Adhoc Regional Coordination Committee on COVID -19 response and resolved to add members from each Partner States – National Task force on COVID -19.

The Ministers Responsible for Health and Ministers responsible for East African Community Affairs:

- a) directed all Partner States to continue implementing mandatory quarantine for 14 days for all travelers to the region, and avoid imported cases by implementing strict screening procedures at all border points;
- b) resolved maintained suspension of EAC regional face-to-face meetings and urged EAC Organs and institutions to utilize Modern Technology such as video-conferences, Webinars and Skype Calls for holding such meetings until such a time when the situation has been contained.
- c) Directed all Partner States to implement 100% exit and entry screenings by applying the multilayer mechanism to avoid some loopholes, such as transit Passengers;
- d) Resolved to facilitate free movements of goods and services in the region;
- e) directed all Partner States to ensure that trucks / vehicles carrying goods:
 - i. have only 2 - 3 crew members per vehicle to facilitate smooth border crossing in the region;
 - ii. crew members are in good health, crew are screened and found to be at high risk or positive for COVID-19, the truck will be decontaminated before it is allowed to continue to its final destination and the crew members will be quarantined for 14 days according to the set national guidelines;
 - iii. in the event that the crew are quarantined while in transit, truck owners / operators make necessary arrangements to backup crew to ensure that goods are delivered to the intended destination;
 - iv. truck drivers are required to declare their final destination and are urged to stop only at designated points along the transport corridors so as to limit chances of spread of COVID-19 during transit;
 - v. the crew for cargo planes and vessels will be determined by the specifications of the aircraft or ship and set international guidelines. The crew will be quarantined at a government designated hotel for the period of their stay;
- f) directed the Partner States to establish a surveillance system to monitor crew health and enable contact tracing;
- g) resolved to strengthen information sharing through press conferences and linkage of national task forces to facilitate quick response, continuous reporting and to facilitate contact tracing for potential COVID- 19 exposed persons;

- h) directed partner states to identify a focal person who is a member of the national task force to facilitate communication between the Partner States, and between Partner States and the EAC Secretariat for the COVID response;**
- i) directed the EAHRC to synthesize and conduct research on COVID -19 and inform the Partner states on new technologies, advances in care and treatment, vaccines, behavior of the virus, diagnostic among others, to inform policy and practice in the region;**
- j) directed respective EAC Partner States' Embassies and High commissions to coordinate their citizens who may have been affected by the closure of borders and to enable them move to their final destination in the EAC region;**
- k) directed partner States to support local companies, to ensure the local production and availability of key consumables / products used in COVID -19 response including Hand sanitizers, medical products, soap, among others; and**
- l) directed all Partner States to provide additional contingency and emergency funds to address gaps in prevention, impact mitigation and other interventions to mitigate impact of COVID -19 and further urged EAC Secretariat and each Partner State to mobilize resources, and invest in public health systems to ensure resilience and health security**

Signed by the EAC Ministers Responsible for Health and EAC Ministers Responsible for EAC Affairs on this 25th Day of March, 2020.

					
Hon. Dr. Daniel Ngamiye	Hon. Adan Mohamed EGH	Hon. Dr. Thaddee Ndikumana	Hon. Ummu Ally Mwalimu	Hon. John Luk Jok	Hon. Maganda Julius Wandera
Minister of Health	Cabinet Secretary	Minister of Public Health and Fight against HIV/AIDS	Minister of Health	Minister of East African Community Affairs	Minister of State for East African Community Affairs
Ministry of Health	Ministry of East African Community and Regional Development	Ministry of Public Health and Fight against HIV/AIDS	Ministry of Health, Community Development, Gender, Elderly and Children	Ministry of East African Community Affairs	Ministry of East African Community Affairs
REPUBLIC OF RWANDA	REPUBLIC OF KENYA	REPUBLIC OF BURUNDI	THE UNITED REPUBLIC OF TANZANIA	REPUBLIC OF SOUTH SUDAN	REPUBLIC OF UGANDA