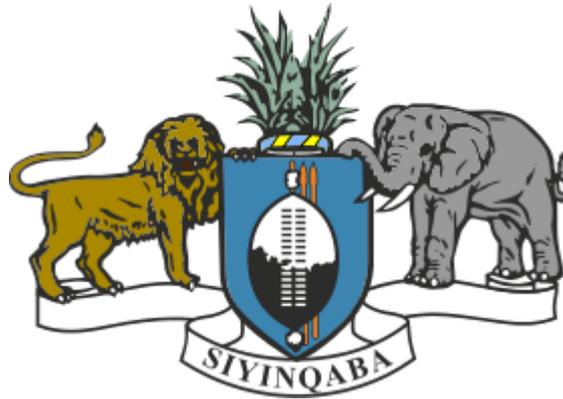


## GOVERNMENT OF THE KINGDOM OF ESWATINI



### PRIME MINISTER'S STATEMENT

#### PARTIAL LOCKDOWN EXTENSION – COVID-19

The Kingdom of Eswatini has embarked on a robust drive to transform the economy and set this country on a path towards sustainable growth and stability. This noble mission is shared and supported by EmaSwati from all corners of our Kingdom. We need a strong and resilient economy to improve and sustain the livelihoods of EmaSwati and future generations.

However, we cannot achieve that goal if the lives of EmaSwati are threatened by a silent killer whose sting and pulse knows no bounds and boundaries. Our efforts to reignite our economy will be a futile exercise if we do not confront this enemy which continues to wreck havoc across the world, causing panic and uncertainty.

Eswatini, like the rest of the world, has traversed through an unprecedented and indefinite path over the past 20 days, when all our non essential services remained suspended to control the spread of the coronavirus also known as COVID 19. The partial lockdown that began on March 27 has changed the way of life as we are used to. It has strained our economy, adversely affected business, health and education, and delayed our economic renewal drive.

No one in the world had been prepared for this pandemic, but the international community is bound by the common objective to rid our globe of this highly contagious virus so that our lives may return to normal as soon as practically possible. Tough decisions have had to be made to protect our citizens and keep the country safe and secure.

It was therefore necessary as a country that we introduce a partial lockdown at the command and wise counsel of His Majesty King Mswati III and Ingwenyama in order to save lives. Projections from health professionals indicate that the partial lockdown measures may have delayed the onset of the infection peak by one to six months, and likely to have reduced the cumulative number of infections in Eswatini. We have seen positive COVID-19 cases increase by seven more during the partial lockdown.

These projections and increase in confirmed cases show that we are not yet at the point of flattening the curve. While a lot has been achieved over the past 20 days, the risk of an uncontrollable spread remains high.

It is for this reason that I have been commanded by His Majesty King Mswati III to announce an extension of the partial lockdown for another three weeks effective at midnight today. **Bayethe Wena Waphakathi.**

This extension of 21 days will buy the country more time to contain the spread of the virus and avoid overwhelming our health system. It will give us enough time to flatten the curve, allow us to aggressively fight the virus, train more health workers and acquire the requisite medical equipment to help EmaSwati face this virus head on.

His Majesty has commanded that this should be a relaxed partial lockdown, allowing low risk non essential business to operate under strict hygiene conditions. This will ensure that we balance the health interests and economic stability of the Kingdom. The Ministry of Commerce, Industry and Trade will announce the low risk non essential business identified in this extended lockdown.

A number of health interventions will be undertaken to aggressively contain the spread of COVID 19 over the next 21 days. They include:

### 1. **Surveillance**

- a. Government will in the next three weeks aggressively increase screening for COVID-19 symptoms in the following places among others:
  - i. i. Contacts of positive cases through the use of our regional rapid response teams
  - ii. ii. Screening at hospital entry points
- iii. Intensified screening at clinics near situated informal crossings
- i. iv. Clients calling the emergency toll-free line reporting symptoms of COVID-19
- ii. v. Returned travelers
- iii. vi. Police roadblocks
- a. All those screened who fit the COVID-19 case definition will have samples taken for testing and be isolated as they await their results in order to curb infection rates
- b. Contact tracing will continue along with spatial monitoring of new cases and surveillance to identify and intervene in hotspots.

### 2. **Identification, isolation, testing and treatment of every case and contact**

- a. Government has established a COVID-19 testing Laboratory in Mbabane and is working to upgrade the Lubombo Referral Laboratory for COVID-19 testing. In the next weeks we will train additional staff members on COVID-19 testing to increase capacity at the Mbabane Molecular Laboratory, including establishment of systems for seamless reporting of results.
- b. We have implemented forecasts for commodities required for testing required and these commodities will continue to be delivered to the country.
- c. The Ministry of Health will be conducting assessments of clients to determine if they are able to self-isolate at home, those who are unable to will be provided with facilities to do so.
- d. Government is recommending the use of ordinary cloth masks for the population at large which will be accompanied by mass education on the use of the masks. Even though ordinary masks do not prevent one from getting COVID-19, they prevent a person with COVID-19 from spreading it.

### 3. **Case Management**

- a. We are building capacity to be able to safely treat all patients requiring hospitalization without resorting to crisis standards of care. We have procured additional beds, ventilators and have recruited additional staff to expand ICU bed capacity for the additional cases that may occur.
- b. Government is renovating some of the health facilities to increase isolation capacity of the country
- c. We are working with the teams on the ground to ensure that all facilities have areas for triage before entering for detection of COVID-19 symptoms.
- d. Approximately 50% of all Health Care workers have been trained and the remaining will be trained during the extension period

### 4. **Infection prevention and control**

- a. All our frontline healthcare workers will be tested for COVID-19 as it is a priority to ensure their protection for continued service delivery
- b. Training on infection control measures for COVID-19 will continue on an ongoing basis as well as procurement and distribution of PPE

### 5. **Port health measures**

- a. All returning travelers will be quarantined in a Government provided accommodation for 14 days upon entry into the country as it can take up to 2 weeks for symptoms to

emerge

It is also evident that the pandemic is severely affecting our businesses, particularly small enterprises. Despite this reality, Government is committed to assist businesses to survive this partial lockdown. Clearly Government does not have the financial muscle and enough resources to save businesses from collapse but we remain determined to meet these businesses halfway and minimize the adverse impact of this pandemic on our economy. We will target those businesses that are willing to retain their employees and continue to pay them during this difficult period.

We will provide relief of up to E90 Million to businesses with a turnover of E8 million or less which mainly are small and medium enterprises. This relief will be directed to businesses that have continually supported the development of the country by complying with their tax obligations, which means they have filed and paid their taxes on time up to the 2019 tax year. This amount will be paid by way of tax refunds through the Eswatini Revenue Authority in monthly instalments of 25% of the actual tax paid in 2019. Specific guidelines on this relief will be provided through the Eswatini Revenue Authority.

May I acknowledge the role that has been played by the Deputy Prime Minister and the National Disaster task teams ever since a National Emergency was declared in the Kingdom. Our Regional Administrators and regional teams have been committed in implementing COVID 19 intervention measures at community level. A number of interventions that have taken place over the past 20 days include that:

- Many public spaces and communities in the country have been assisted with hand washing facilities, including 506 water tanks and public information through the media and distribution of Information and Educational material has been increased.
- The process of disinfecting public spaces has been initiated mainly in our cities and it will soon be extended to towns.
- At least 500 Volunteers have been activated to work with communities to raise awareness.
- A total E47 million in kind and E70 million in cash has been raised by both Government, businesses, individuals in Eswatini and development partners.

May I take this opportunity to thank our international friends and partners who have come on board to assist the Kingdom win this fight, including the gracious donation we have received from the United Nations. My sincere gratitude goes to Taiwan who are assisting us with financial and human resources, including supplying the country with the necessary equipment so required to conquer this virus. Taiwan has provided the Kingdom with 4 specialist doctors and equipment which include 13 ventilators, 500 forehead thermometers, 7 infrared scanners and 60 000 surgical masks.

Government is indebted to His Majesty King Mswati III and Ingwenyama for leading the charge against this virus and showing us direction. His Majesty is well and healthy. Those misleading the nation about his health will be dealt with in line with the law.

We are also appreciative to all Emaswati who have taken these tough measures in their stride. The nation is not doing government a favour by respecting the partial lockdown measures and following health advice but protecting each other, communities and country by acting responsibly.

May I inform the public that the production and distribution of alcohol is prohibited for the duration of this partial lockdown as it is considered high risk.

While this partial lockdown means people working in non essential will continue working from home, it is essential that I remind all heads of departments in the civil service to continue going to work to avoid grounding government machinery. All essential government services are expected to be operational without exception. It has also been of importance to ensure that all critical government institutions that are vital in keeping government functional be allowed to work.

I therefore announce that in the exercise of powers conferred by COVID 19 Regulation 25, the Prime Minister has also issued a directive varying the gathering of Parliament and Cabinet so that they can continue to operate during this partial lockdown as they are critical institutions for decision making.

As we observe the partial lockdown and restrict unnecessary movement and stay at home, let us remember to follow the precautionary guidelines as provided by the Ministry of Health and the World Health Organisation. These include:

- Our home environment should be kept clean and safe and all high touch surfaces must be disinfected regularly.
- Wash hands regularly with running water and soap. Help the young to also appropriately wash hands. In the absence of water and soap, the public is advised to use sanitizers.
- Stop shaking hands and use other non touch methods of greeting.
- Maintain a distance of at least 1 metre from each other.
- 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. The public can also call the Emergency toll free line 112 for COVID 19 related emergency inquiries and for reporting incidences related to the response and interventions of the virus.

Thank you.

**Ambrose Mandvulo Dlamini**

**PRIME MINISTER**

**15 April 2020**