

ADDRESS

BY

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PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF UGANDA**

TO THE NATION

**LATEST UPDATES ON MATTERS
REGARDING CORONA VIRUS (COVID 19)**

**4TH MAY, 2020
NAKASERO**

Countrymen and Countrywomen,

Greetings,

When you are confronted with a new disease like covid-19 (*Ssenyiga-omukambwe*), you must answer three (3) questions: Is it vaccinatable? Is it treatable? Is it avoidable by behaviour of the people? The answer to the 3 questions is that, in the case of covid-19, it seems that, eventually, all the 3 are possible. However, no.1 is still being worked on. Even here, we have started trying to develop a vaccine. However, it will take some 18 months. Is it treatable? Yes, we have actually treated 55 people and they have recovered and been discharged. However, the treatability of this disease seems to depend alot on the numbers of the infected people remaining small so that the medical workers concentrate effort on the patients. The first patient to recover on treatment, took 16 days of concentrated attention by our medical workers at Entebbe Hospital.

This now leads us to the fourth question": "Is this disease very infectious?" "Yes", if you do not take precautions and "no" if you take precautions.

Hence, ever since the emergence of the corona-virus threat in March, 2020, we started on the prevention by avoiding on a massive scale and also treatment as we alerted our scientists to start working on the vaccine. Between the 18th of March and the 30th of March, I announced a total of 35 actions that involved all the 42 million people of Uganda. These were:

1. Close all the Educational Institutions which account for 15 million young Ugandans;
2. Suspend communal prayers in Mosques, Churches or in Stadia and other open air venues;
3. Stop all public political rallies, cultural gatherings or conferences;
4. Banned Ugandans from moving to or through category one (I) countries that had had a large number of corona cases by that time;
5. Allow returning Ugandans provided they undergo mandatory quarantine, at their cost, for 14 days at a venue identified by the Ministry of Health;
6. Allow the non-agricultural gathering points e.g. factories, hotels, large plantations, markets, taxi-parks, etc to continue and follow the SOPs (Standard Operating Procedures) put out by the Ministry of Health;

7. Discourage the hexagonal, extravagant Ugandan-style weddings; Weddings allowed only for a maximum of 7 people;
8. Burials could not be postponed, but should be for a maximum of 10 people (close family members);
9. Suspended weekly or monthly markets such as cattle auction markets (*ebikomera*); and obutare (food markets);
10. At that time, allowed the public transport systems of buses, mini-buses, taxis, boda-bodas, etc., to continue provided they were given SOPs;
11. Suspended all the discos, dances, bars, sports, music shows, cinemas and concerts;
12. Advised the public to maintain hygiene measures such as: not coughing or sneezing in public, no spitting, washing with soap and water or using sanitizers, regularly disinfecting surfaces such as tables, door handles, etc. and not touching your eyes, nose or mouth with contaminated and unwashed hands;
13. Advised the public on good nutrition to strengthen the body defence system;
14. Stopped all passengers coming into Uganda by air, land or water; this affected in-coming planes, buses, taxis or boats. Closed Entebbe International Airport and all other border points of entry except for Cargo airplanes and trucks;
15. Prohibited pedestrians from entry into the country from the neighbouring countries;

16. All public passenger transport vehicles are stopped i.e. taxis, coasters, buses, passenger trains, tuk-tuks (tri-cycles) and bodabodas;
17. Only food sellers should remain in the markets; the non-food sellers should suspend their activities;
18. Private vehicles should continue but with only 3 people maximum per vehicle at that time;
19. Ambulances, army vehicles, garbage collection vehicles, etc., would continue;
20. Banned the movement of all privately owned passenger vehicles because owners had abused them by turning them into taxis;
21. Suspended the shopping arcades, hardware shops, which gather a lot of people to sell and buy non-food items. These were suspended for 14 days starting on the 1st of April, 2020;
22. Directed all the non-food shops (stores) to close. Only food shops, shops selling agricultural products, veterinary products, detergents and pharmaceuticals should remain open. Home deliveries should, instead, be encouraged;
23. The super-markets should remain open but with clear SOPs that restrict numbers that enter and leave the site at a given time and the handling of trolleys within the super-markets.
24. Established Food Markets in Kampala and the other towns should continue to be open while maintaining social distancing;

25. The sellers must not go home during the 14 days. They must arrange to stay nearby for that duration. It is that mixing that we want to freeze – between home, enroute and workplace.
26. Salons, Lodges and garages should also be shut for 14 days from the 1st of April, 2020.
27. Like the farms, factories should remain open. But the owners should arrange for the crucial employees to camp around the factory area for the 14 days. If they cannot do that, let them suspend production for 14 days;
28. Construction sites should continue if they can be able to encamp their workers for 14 days. Otherwise, they should suspend construction for the 14 days;
29. The essential services i.e., the medical, agriculture and veterinary, telecommunication, door-to-door delivery, financial institutions, all media, Private Security companies, cleaning services, garbage collection, fire-brigade, fuel stations, water departments, funeral services and some KCCA staff should continue to operate;
30. Cargo transport by train, plane, lorry, pick-up, tuku-tukus, bodaboda and bicycle, within Uganda and between Uganda and the outside, must continue but only with minimum numbers, technically needed as follows: Cargo – Air-craft – only the crew; Lorry – not more than 3 persons i.e. driver, turn-boy plus one, etc., as will be directed by the Ministry of Transport, working with the National Task Force on the Coronavirus;
31. URA should also not close business on account of not paying taxes in these 14 days;
32. Gatherings of more than 5 persons are hereby prohibited;

33. Except for cargo planes, lorries, pick-ups and trains, starting with the 31st of March, 2020, at 1900 hours, there will be a curfew throughout the whole of Uganda up to 6:30am;
34. In order to deal with other health emergencies, permission can be sought from the RDC to use private transport to take a sick person to hospital. Additionally, government vehicles that do not belong to UPDF, Police, Prisons or UWA, will be pooled and deployed at the District Health Offices, including the divisions of Kampala, with their drivers, staying in tented compounds, ready to help in those health emergencies. Those vehicles will be under the command of the District Medical Officer;
35. Boda bodas should stop at 2:00pm.

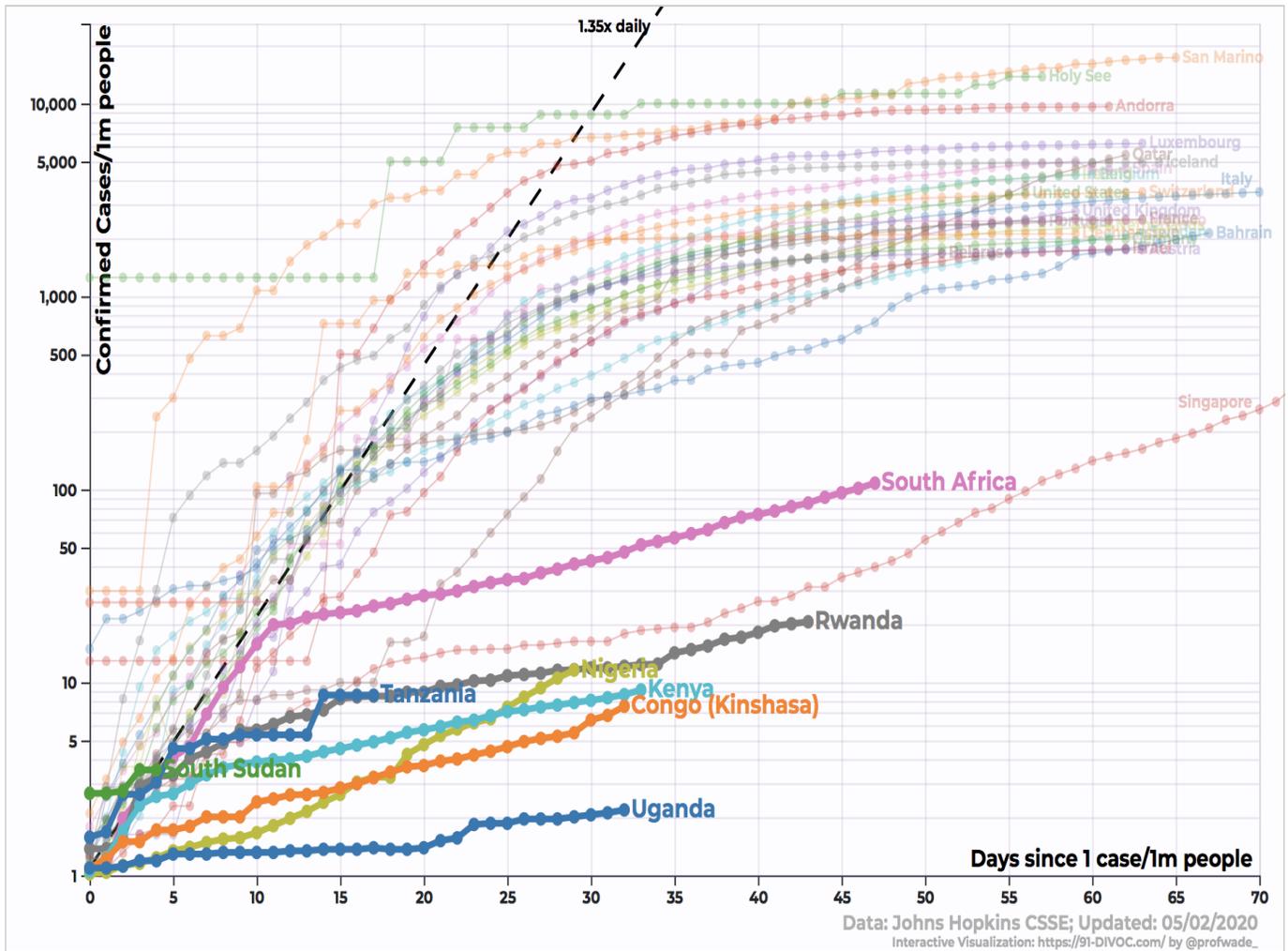
In our bush language, all these measures were aimed at: “*simama, piga magoti, nyamanzeni and sikiliza* – stop, kneel, keep quiet and listen”. In that way, you can hear clearly *ekirikukaabuza* (moving in the grass or bush), locate its approximate position and act.

In the listening, we have confirmed what we already suspected that the danger, the polluting factors (*ebitokoozi* – something foreign dropping in our tea, for instance), were coming from Dubai, UK, USA, China, etc., either directly into Uganda and, or in a minority of cases, through the neighbouring countries. We did this identification through quarantining the returnees and testing them after 14

days, tracing their contacts (the people they interacted with), also testing Ugandans who get worried that they may have picked up the virus even when they have not traveled and volunteer to be tested and the cargo drivers from the neighbouring countries. We have tested a total of 38,845 persons belonging to the four categories. Only 89 persons have tested positive (found with the virus) out of this number. Recently, our health workers added a fifth category that they call rapid assessment survey. Under this survey, they randomly test people who could have interacted with the lorry drivers, border communities, immigration people, law enforcement and patients in hospitals, etc. Out of these, 601 such tests have so far been done and one (1) person found positive. This positive case is already part of the 89 positive mentioned above. However, the 601 study samples are not part of the 38,845 routine tests done.

Therefore, the curve of the spread of the corona virus in Uganda is as follows below and you can compare it with the curves of other countries in the World:

COVID-19 Cases by Country, normalized by country population



This means that we have somehow tamed the virus although we cannot say that we have eliminated it. I, therefore, congratulate the Ugandans for doing what I knew that they could do. The Ugandans can undertake any effort, they can make any sacrifice, to defend themselves in any and all legitimate causes.

I know this because I led them in the anti-Amin war, in the War of Liberation of 1981-86 and the wars against the terrorists and cattle rustlers of 1986-2007 (with the defeat of ADF in Semliki Park). The picture of the market women that have camped in the market without going home ever since the 18th of March, 2020, reminded me of when the one (1) million people of the Luwero Triangle camped in the forests and Savannah, having run from their homes. They stayed out of their homes, until the victory in 1986. Congratulations for resurrecting the Luwero Triangle spirit of sacrifice and volunteerism (*obwanakyewa*) and putting to shame the culture of opportunism (*nalira-wa*) and careerism (*noonya mirimo*).

When it comes to fighting the virus, the NRM always fights difficult but intelligently structured wars. We never fight suicidal wars. That is called adventurism. You should fight a war that is strategically (in the long run) winnable. Similarly, in this anti-coronavirus war, our strategy is to prevent the spread of the disease, initially, by the concentration of the masses of the people avoiding getting infected. All the 35 measurers were just aimed at this.

However, this avoidance of infection had to be achieved without also committing suicide.

How do you achieve the two? Avoiding mass infection but not committing suicide. By doing two main things: dispersing all the main concentrations of people and stopping their movements (staying at home) but allowing farming, manufacturing, construction, transport of cargo and the essential services (electricity, water, etc.), to continue. The majority of these have been moving well. We only got a problem with the inter-State cargo transport. I have, however, spoken to H.E. Kenyatta, H.E. Magufuli, H.E. Kagame and the matter will be streamlined. I will also speak to H.E. Salva Kiir and H.E. Tshisekedi. The Ministers of Health of Uganda, Kenya, Tanzania and Rwanda have been instructed by their leaders to harmonize on this issue. Actually, this challenge of the lorry drivers is good in a way. It has exposed the irrationality of using Lorries for long distance travel. It is cheaper and safer (against accidents, cargo theft, spreading diseases, damaging roads) to use rail and water transport where they are available and also cheaper. A net tonne of goods from Mombasa to Kampala by road is US\$13cents while by rail, it is US\$7cents. Therefore, we, in

Uganda, are going to repair the old railway line as we plan to build the new one, the Standard Gauge Railway. With the old line working fully, goods can go all the way to Pakwach and Kasese and Bihaanga. Even now, the Kampala-Malaba portion and the Port-Bell-Mwanza portion are fully operational. Hence, cargo can be transferred to the railway and the ships/wagon ferries. The Uganda Railways, only needs to sort out the issue of locomotives. However, there are no railway lines going all the way to South Sudan, Congo and Rwanda. There, we need to continue using the trucks. Nevertheless, the old line fully functional, would reduce the lorry trips to may be Bihaanga, Kasese and Pakwach for vehicles from South Sudan, Congo and Rwanda. Therefore, all Ugandans need to know that it is suicidal to agitate for the banning of Lorries for now. Let us first work on the rail and water transport. Moreover, what needs to be done is for the grand-daughters to keep away from these drivers. They will also be told to only stop in certain areas.

The lock-down was in order for us to understand the problem better but also prepare better. The real solution for the virus is immunization and treatment which are being worked on by us and others.

However, what is available now is prevention by avoiding infection and the treatment that is being given in the specialized hospitals provided the numbers are not too many. The last 45 days of lock-down, have given us time to be better prepared on the front of prevention by the avoidance of infection. We are better prepared in the following areas:

- (1) The local factories (Nytil, Fine-Spinners, Mulwana, Prof. William Bazeyo, UIRI) are either manufacturing the face masks and the PPEs (Personal Protective Equipment) or are in the process of manufacturing them.
- (2) The local factories, 38 of them, are now making enough quantities of sanitizers e.g. (Saraya Manufacturing (U) Ltd., Wandaz Products Ltd., Dei Natural Products Int. Ltd., Nucleus Harvest Ltd., Adma Int. Ltd., Luwero Industries, Globo Chemical (U) Ltd., Ranish Logistics Ltd., Sheen Plus Cosmetics SMC Ltd., Zest Pharmacy Ltd., etc., etc).
- (3) In addition to the specialized treatment centres in Entebbe, Mulago and the Women's hospital, there are now another 14 treatment centres set

up at 14 Regional Referral Hospitals spread across the country. These are: Arua, Gulu, Lira, Soroti, Moroto, Mbale, Hoima, Jinja, Mubende, Fort Portal, Kabale, Mbarara, Masaka and Naguru Referral Hospitals. Furthermore, District Surveillance and Laboratory Focal Persons can collect samples from suspect cases and contacts and send them to Kampala or Entebbe UVRI for testing through the 100 established transport hubs. That is why some patients have already been successfully treated at Adjumani, Hoima and Masaka.

- (4) Our vast network of the Resistance Councils, whose designation was changed to LCs, that have made the villages a no go area for people who try to sneak into the country secretly from outside. It is these that got the two Barundi refugees that had escaped from Nakivaale Refugee camp, gone to Dar-es-Salaam and tried to sneak back into the country through Rakai assisted by a Ugandan bodaboda rider against the provisions of health regulations. Only the other day, the LCs got us a student who had sneaked back from a Technical School in Bukoba to the village of Bulanga, Baale Parish,

Kibanda sub-county in Rakai. The two Barundi refugees, the stupid bodaboda cyclist that was carrying them and the student from Bukoba have all tested positive. All this is the work of the LCs. I thank you so much. My partners at the national level (the politicians) must agree with my view that the scientists must be paid what they would earn internationally, we must pay the security forces better and the LCs must get more support. Together with the private sector, these 3 have done alot for the recovery and safety of Uganda.

- (5) The understanding and co-operation of the majority of Ugandans. I salute you, again. On account of what you have done, we have avoided images we have seen in other countries of coffins and coffins.

With these five, even as we wait for the vaccine and more potent treatment drugs, it is high time we remember what the Banyankore say. They say: “*Tihariho owayangire kugwejegyera, ngu ataroota*”, – “you cannot refuse to sleep for the fear of dreaming a bad dream” – because sleeping is vital for continued living. We must, therefore, basing ourselves on the

limited preparation we have done, start slowly and carefully to open up but without undoing our achievements: only 89 positive (both Ugandan and non-Ugandan); 55 healed and discharged; and no deaths related to corona-virus.

Remembering that our survival core strategy is around: agriculture, factories, construction, food markets and shops; cargo transport and essential services, in opening up, we should start with measures that consolidate these. Such measures are the following:

1. With agriculture continuing to function, we had correctly allowed the food markets to continue operating. Hence, those will continue. Some portion of agriculture was supplying hotels on account of tourism. That has, of course, suffered. However, given the high sickness levels abroad, we cannot risk to open the Airports or the land and water borders for passengers. Those that were supplying eggs, milk, etc., to hotels, should look for other opportunities. One very innovative Ugandan is now processing egg-yolk (omutorro) into egg powder, pasteurized egg yolk and egg white (*orwiizi*) into pastry cream for

baking, mayonnese and the *ekishankara* (egg shell) into highly nutritious porridge which is rich in calcium; and also turned into animal feeds. The milk producers are now processing milk into casseine (a protein for food supplements and baby foods), cheese, butter, ghee, etc.

2. Since the factories have been open, they need whole sellers to buy their products. Accordingly, we shall allow the whole sellers to open. However, the whole-sellers will observe the social distancing rules. The seller must be two (2) meters from the customer (but should be protected with a mask) and the customers must be four (4) meters apart. The shops should not operate air-conditioning. They must be air-supplied by open windows and door-ways.
3. Also allowed to open are the hardware shops so that they sell factory goods (cement, *mitayimbwa*, *sengenge*, paint, etc.), but also supply the construction sites.

4. Since cargo trucks are moving and have been moving, they need mechanics to maintain them. Accordingly, we shall allow the opening of the repair workshops (garages).
5. Also to be opened will be the metal and wood workshops.
6. Insurance providers will be added to the list of essential services so that they can support the factories, the farms and the shops.
7. The Uganda Law Society will be allowed a quota of 30 lawyers at any one time to provide urgent legal services to the different businesses and to handle urgent criminal matters like arraignment.
8. Restaurants will only be allowed to provide take-aways.
9. Warehouses are vital for the storing of factory products; so they will be allowed.

We have not yet thought it wise to allow either public or private passenger vehicles to operate. Therefore, we direct that the modes of all these people going to work should be as follows:

- (i) Buses (either owned or hired by the employer);
- (ii) Cycling to the work place by bicycle; or
- (iii) Walking to the work place.

This means that the workers that were supposed to be encamped near the work place should either maintain that because that is the most preferred way; or, if they cannot, they can now operate from home but use any one of the modes of transport laid out above: bussing; cycling; or walking. The safeguard here is that these workers (for factory, workshop, etc.) are known and we can even follow each one of them up to home and monitor his/her family. This means, therefore, that the worker, when she or he goes home, should only stay at home – not visit neighbours, etc. This is to enable us to monitor what is happening in the country with these limited groups of Ugandans so that it can guide us up to the next stage of more opening up.

The other safeguard in this is that we are going to make it mandatory for everybody who is not in his/her house to wear a cloth face mask covering, all the time, the mouth and the nose. This is currently being produced by NYTIL. Why this type of mask? This is not the surgical mask worn by health workers while in clinics. It is also not the N-95 worn by health care workers in isolation treatment centres or those taking samples from suspected cases. It is, however, crucial that everybody that is going out in public should wear this mask. Why? It is because, remember, the virus rides on the droplets (*orwooya* – invisible tiny mucous particles) that come out of people's mouths or nose when they sneeze (*kwetsyamura*), cough (*kukorora*) or even breathe normally (*kwiitsya*). If you want to confirm this, go before a mirror and blow your hot breathe to the mirror. You will see a film of mist forming on the mirror. Those are the droplets (*orwooya*) on which the virus rides for about four (4) meters from the infected person to the victim in the case of sneezing (*kwetsyamura*) or coughing (*kukorora*). If it is ordinary breathing (*kwiitsya*), the virus may go for up to 1-2 meters from an infected person.

The mask stops that ride. The droplets (*orwooya*) are/is trapped by the mask. This means that the mask may become a seed-bed (*ebeedi*) for the virus. You, therefore, need to do two things. First, at the end of each day, put off that mask, wash it with soap, dry it and iron it (*okugorora*) with a hot flat iron (*paasi*). All the viruses will die. Secondly, because during the day, one may keep adjusting one's mask, one should wash hands frequently with soap or use hand-sanitizers.

With these limited measures of opening-up in the first phase, we should maintain the other measures of social distancing – staying at least four (4) meters from the next person even in the factory or any other work-place, regularly sanitizing surfaces such as table-tops, door-handles and factory floors, eating fruits and taking vitamins, etc. Nobody who is coughing or sneezing should be allowed to mix with others and when you have a fever, contact your nearest health unit by phone. Do not go to the Health centre. People from the hub will come and take a sample from you without mixing with other people.

If there is a positive person discovered in an area, that area will be put in a quarantine for 14 days as we did with the Masindi Police barracks recently. Also the family of the student from Bukoba in Tanzania has been put in quarantine – this is 13 in number.

All the other measures announced earlier will stay in place for another 14 days and we shall, then, review the situation just before the end of that period. These are the big measures we took at the beginning of the crises: the closure of schools, the suspending of public assemblies for politics or culture, the religious assemblies, etc., etc.

The virus may move in the population in spite of all these measures. When it moves in the population slowly, according to our scientists, it is actually good because we get manageable numbers of infected people at any given time, whom we treat until they get healed, like the 55 that have healed now. With the immunity of these people, they now become a type of a fire-break for the virus. When the virus comes to them, they can no longer be infected by the virus and the *emponoka* (the survivors) can no longer transmit it.

It is similar to the way we used to fight fire. Worried about the uncontrolled wild fire, a careful home owner would, at night when there is some coolness and moisture in the air, start a fire around the homestead that would create a belt of *oruhiira* (burnt grass) around the home. This is called *okuchwererera*. That belt of deliberately created *ruhiira* would, stop the wildfire when it comes. The healed are the friendly *ruhiira*.

The war against the virus seems not to be a quick-decision war but a protracted one until we get a vaccine.

With the economy, see what I said on the 1st of May, 2020, Labour Day. We shall manage both health wise and economically, if we follow this plan. The virus has been with us since the 21st of March when the first positive person was discovered. It is now 43 days since that date. We have had 89 cases, nobody has died and 55 people have been healed. This is in spite of testing 38,845 persons. That is not bad. Up to now, we have avoided the tens of thousands of coffins you have seen on TV in other countries. We can defeat the virus if we act correctly.

Remember:

- (1) Do not go in public when you are sneezing (*kwetsyamura*) or coughing (*kukorora*);
- (2) Do not be less than four (4) meters from one another;
- (3) Do not shake hands or hug, including the childish knocking of *enkokora* (elbows) — totally unnecessary;
- (4) Wash hands often;
- (5) Do not touch with unwashed hands your eyes, nose or mouth;
- (6) Regularly sanitize surfaces that are used by many people (tables, door-handles, etc.);
- (7) Put on masks when you are away from your home and you are in public.

There are Ugandans who have been caught by the virus crisis in the Kampala area who want to be allowed to walk to their areas (villages), so that they can get food more reliably. We are studying that idea to see the dangers of spreading the disease involved and the benefits.

Avoid domestic violence. Families are the purpose of life. Treasure families. Use dialogue instead of fighting. You do not have to agree. However, you do not have to fight. The Banks and landlords that are demanding the payment of loans and rent are not reasonable. They may not cancel the debts or the loans. They can, however, reschedule them. The Government will not tolerate such inconsiderate actions. You are making money from and out of our people. You must also understand their plight and not exacerbate it.

I thank you Ugandans. God is helping us. We shall win.

4th May, 2020

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Nakasero

