

REPUBLIC OF NAMIBIA



**STATEMENT BY HON. DR. KALUMBI SHANGULA, MINISTER OF HEALTH
AND SOCIAL SERVICES,
ON THE OCCASION OF A PRESS CONFERENCE ON THE LABORATORY
RESULTS OF A SUSPECTED CORONA VIRUS CASE.**

05 FEBRUARY 2019

WINDHOEK

**Check Against Delivery*

Director of the Programme,
Senior Officials of the Ministry of Health and Social Services
Members of the Media,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for joining us here this afternoon, on a rather short notice. I will say that your positive response to our invitation is understandable and appreciated, especially because, Namibia, like other countries around the world, is actively engaged in implementing measures to avoid the entry of the Novel Corona Virus into our country.

As reported broadly in local and international media in recent days, the Novel 2019 Corona Virus, which started in Wuhan, China has spread to many countries around the world. The World Health Organization (WHO) has announced that as of 4th February 2020, there are now **20,471** confirmed cases and **425** people have died.

With respect to the situation in other countries around the world, there are now **159** confirmed cases in **23** countries. There has been one (1) death, which occurred in The Philippines. The Director-General of WHO has declared the outbreak of 2019-nCoV constitutes as a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC).

SUSPECTED CORONAVIRUS PATIENT IN SWAKOPMUND DISTRICT

On 31st January 2020, a female Namibian patient, aged 30, presented at the Swakopmund District Hospital casualty at 18:00, with coughing, running nose and a headache. The patient had traveled to Sydney, Australia and returned to Namibia through the Hosea Kutako International Airport via Doha, Qatar. She had not complained of fever.

This person entered Namibia through Hosea Kutako Airport on 27 January 2020, and stayed in Khomasdal, Windhoek, for three days. She then travelled to Swakopmund on Thursday 30th of January 2020. The patient stated she was in an airplane with people from China who were wearing masks and coughing. On the same day, she presented to the Swakopmund State Hospital. She was reviewed by a medical officer, who decided that the patient should be isolated, as a Suspected Coronavirus patient.

The patient's Vital signs were as follows:

Temperature: 35°C; Pulse: 81; BP: 127/80, and PO2: 99%.

The patient had queued for health services with about 30 other patients; was done vital signs and screened before isolation measures were initiated. The two nurses who attended to the patient are also quarantined. The patients who sat in the queue with the Coronavirus suspected patient were given health education, contact numbers were taken and they were informed to be self-quarantine at home and present at the health facility if they experience any signs and symptoms, consistent with Corona Virus infection. The Coronavirus suspected patient was put in the isolation unit away from other patients and the public. Staff wore personal protective equipment (PPE) after patient was suspected to have the Coronavirus. Face masks were given to other patients and the staff and the suspected Coronavirus patient was also provided with a N95 mask.

Samples were taken and sent for testing to the National Institute of Communicable Diseases (NICD) Laboratory in Johannesburg, South Africa. The NICD is a WHO accredited

Laboratory which provides specialized diagnostic and pathological services to countries in the SADC Region, with respect to the testing of rare and uncommon diseases.

The samples were dispatched on 3rd February 2020. I wish to inform the nation that we have received the results back from NICD and they indicate that the patient is not infected with the novel 2019 Corona Virus. I must stress that this person was screened at HKIA and was cleared. It therefore shows that our screening method at the airport is effective and can be relied upon.

Although the results are negative, this does not mean that Namibia should rest on our laurels. It only means that we must strengthen our preparedness to ensure that Corona Virus does not enter and spread in our country. I also wish to assure the nation that steps have been taken to capacitate the Namibia Institute of Pathology (NIP) to be able to conduct confirmatory tests of suspected novel 2019 Corona Virus. In addition to the measures put in place, conducting these tests locally will tremendously strengthen our response to be able to treat and manage patients timeously, in case a where a positive case is identified.

I take this opportunity to thank our health workers who were at the forefront of dealing with this suspected case. I also thank other Namibians who are working day and night at our ports of entry to screen arriving passengers and thereby protecting the Namibian people against this new threat.

By way of an update, I wish to inform the nation what we have done as part of our interventions to respond to the Corona Virus threat.

Namibia's Response to Date

1. National Health Emergency Committee on the 2019-nCoV activated. The Committee is chaired by the Director of Health Information and Research in the Ministry of Health and Social Services.
2. The Ministry has sent letters to all Regional Directors of the Ministry of Health and Social Services to activate Regional Health Emergency Management Committee and to prepare by assessing their readiness and determining additional needs required for prompt response.
3. A costed 2019-nCoV preparedness and response plan is being finalized.
4. Social Mobilization/ awareness raising has been done through local media (TV, radio, print and electronics).
5. Information, Education and Communication (IEC) materials (Banners, leaflets, questionnaires and posters) are finalized and distributed.
6. Port Health officials were deployed to Hosea Kutako International Airport, Walvis Bay Airport and Eros Airport.
7. Isolation facilities for to accommodate suspected cases identified at Windhoek Central Hospital (Ward 6) and equipping the isolation facility at the Hosea Kutako International Airport is underway.
8. Ministry of Health and Social Services has engaged the Ministry of Defense to deploy the Mobile Field Hospital to Hosea Kutako International Airport to support existing infrastructure.

9. Request is underway to the Ministry of Works and Transport NAC to schedule the arrival of flights in such a way to avoid overcrowding/congestion and facilitate screening of the passengers effectively.
10. In addition, it has been requested that all chartered aircraft arrivals from outside Namibia be routed through Hosea Kutako International Airport and Walvis Bay Airport in order to minimize health risk posed by international travel.
11. Arrangements will be made by Namibia Civil Aviation Authorities with the health officials at the airports for all international chartered planes to be screened upon arrivals at different local airports.
12. The Procurement of additional infection control equipment is in progress. Initial batches have been sourced and dispatched to different Ports of Entry.

World Health Organisation (WHO) Requirements

1. It is expected that further more cases may appear in different countries. Thus, all countries should be prepared for containment, including active surveillance, early detection, isolation and case management, contact tracing and prevention of onward spread of 2019-nCoV infection, and to share full data with WHO.
2. Countries are legally required to share information with WHO under the International Health Regulations (IHR).
3. Any detection of coronavirus in an animal (including information about the species, diagnostic tests, and relevant epidemiological information) should be reported to the World Organization for Animal Health (OIE) as an emerging disease.
4. Countries should place particular emphasis on reducing human infection, prevention of secondary transmission and international spread, and contributing to the international response through multi-sectoral communication and collaboration and active participation in increasing knowledge on the virus and the disease, as well as advancing research.
5. Any travel or trade restriction based on the current information available are not recommended.
6. Countries must inform WHO about travel measures taken, as required by the IHR. Countries are cautioned against actions that promote stigma or discrimination, in line with the principles of Article 3 of the IHR.

I can inform you that the World Health Organization is satisfied with the measures that Namibia has taken in response to the coronavirus outbreak in China.

Another case that was also sent for testing came out negative. This is a case of a Chinese national who returned from China on the 18th January 2020. He displayed no signs of anything but the local doctor decided to have him tested.

I once more would like to appeal to the public to remain alert but not to panic. We will update the nation through you on any new development.