

Fellow Kenyans,

This morning, I chaired the Sixth Extraordinary Session of the National and County governments Summit. Our agenda focused on COVID-19 and the decision we made to de-escalate COVID measures on 27th September 2020.

We interrogated our performance during the last 38 days of de-escalation, and asked what we could have done better.

We then reviewed where our strengths and weaknesses lay, and how we must forge ahead in the coming months.

Today being the 38th day since we eased our COVID measures on 27th September 2020, a lot has changed. When we made the decision to re-open the country, our positivity rate had fallen from 13% in June 2020, and 7% in July 2020, to a low of 4% in September 2020.

Our COVID bed occupancy had also gone down by 60% and we had flattened the curve to below the 5% positivity rate recommended by the World Health Organization (WHO). This is what gave us the courage to re-open and ease out COVID measures. But 38 days later, we have experienced a reversal. If COVID bed occupancy had gone down by 60%, giving us comfort to re-open in September, the occupancy has now gone up by 140% during the 38 days of easing COVID measures.

COVID positivity rate has also shot up from 4% in September when we re-opened, to an average of 16% in October. This is 4 times what the rate was in September. If one person was positive in September, four people became positive in October. That is the literal interpretation of this statistic. In October only, we have had over 15,000 new cases of Corona infections and approximately 300 deaths according to the National Multi-Agency Command Centre on COVID- 19.

In fact, October has been recorded as the most tragic month in our fight against COVID.

Now we are staring at a new wave of this pandemic. And the question is, where did we go wrong? What could we have done differently?

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Although the second wave of this pandemic is a global affair, the last eight months have taught us a few lessons that are useful in combating the new surge.

Firstly, our most successful fight against this virus was recorded after the measures we took on July 27th 2020. The stringent measures saw a fall in new cases from 4720 during the first week of July 2020 to 866 new cases during the second week of September 2020. But when we de-escalated measures in September 2020, the 866 new cases recorded in the second week of September rose to 6402 cases by the last week of October 2020.

These figures suggest a correlation between stringent measures and a drop in infections. They suggest that in order to heal the country in the long-run, we have to make some sacrifices in the short-run.

Secondly, the last 8 months have taught us that the exercise of 'civic responsibility' is a central plank in the war against this pandemic. Between June and end of September 2020, the country witnessed a heightened level of public awareness and restraint.

Observation of COVID protocols was also recorded as high during this period.

But after de-escalating the measures at the end of September 2020, Kenyans seem to have 'backtracked' from their good COVID practices. And all this was built on the wrong notion that, because the curve was flattening, the country is now safe.

That is why I warned in my last COVID address that, what seemed like victory in September, could become a big liability in October. I said that, we may win the battle in September, but lose the overall war if we are not vigilant. More so because the most fragile point in any war happens at the point when victory is in sight. And this is why I emphasized that to win the overall war, the citizens have to exercise their 'civic duty and responsibility' of observing the COVID Protocols.

The third lesson of the last 8 months has to do with enforcement. Over this period, it cannot be gainsaid that the public has suffered a certain level of COVID fatigue. And with this fatigue, public responsiveness to COVID protocols has also reduced. This has resulted in the over-stretching of enforcement agencies, reducing their efficacy.

But as I mentioned during my 10th COVID address, the government cannot 'police the morality' of its citizens.

We will double our enforcement efforts, but the public must also play its role. You must remember that my government's desire is to re-open the country and remain open. But whether or not we will remain open depends on the public's responsiveness to COVID Protocols. Fourthly, and as I mentioned to the COVID Summit today, this moment provides a unique call to leadership. Although public and civic responsiveness are critical to fighting the rising COVID numbers, leadership is what will reverse this escalation.

And my observation is that, if the public has 'backslidden' from its vigilant fight against this pandemic, this has been occasioned in part by a diminishing stamina on the part of our leaders. If the nation is succumbing to the fatigue created by the virus, it would be a tragedy if the leaders give in to the weariness as well. And if the people have fallen short of giving their best at this time, we the leaders have no option but to give our all. We must "...know the way, go the way, and show the way".

And by leaders here, I refer to those in government, in the corporate sector, religious institutions and other national agencies. My call to action is for them to rise to the occasion and help the country navigate through the uncertainties of this pandemic. And while at it, I urge these leaders not to make popular decisions to appease the public. They must choose the bold over the popular if it serves country better.

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Now therefore, on recommendations of the National Security Advisory Committee, the National Emergency Response Committee and with the concurrence of the Sixth Extra-Ordinary Session of the National and County Governments, the protocols and guidelines that were previously eased are reviewed as follows:

i. I direct all Cabinet Secretaries, Chief Administrative Secretaries and Principal Secretaries to scale-down all in-person engagements within Government and to take appropriate steps to foster the discharge of their mandates by themselves and their officers through virtual means where possible.

ii. Similarly, and to protect government staffers drawn from vulnerable groups, I direct that all State and Public Officers aged above 58 years or who are immunocompromised to work remotely. With the exemption of those serving the nation in critical sectors.

iii. With respect to the Examination Classes that have already resumed learning, I hereby order that they continue with their learning and examination preparations under heightened health safety measures; with all other basic learning classes resuming in-person learning in January 2021.

iv. To foster the State's preparedness towards the reopening of all other classes in our learning institutions, I, urge Members of Parliament to engage their respective NG-CDF Boards with a view of finding ways to augment the existing interventions that are geared towards reopening. I urge them to make investments that focus on additional handwashing points, face masks, general sanitation and physical distancing of students and teachers.

v. That all Political Gatherings and Rallies are Suspended for a period of 60 days with immediate effect. Anyone wishing to hold such meetings should do so in town halls and must observe all COVID protocols, including limiting the attendees to one-third seating capacity of the hall.

vi. To enforce compliance at both the National and County level, I, direct that the Ministry of Interior constitutes a Special Enforcement Unit made up of the National Police Service, National Government Administration Officers and supplemented by the County Government inspectorate units to jointly enforce compliance to COVID Protocols.

vii. That the nationwide curfew is extended up to 3rd January, 2021.

viii. That beginning tonight 4th November, the curfew will now be enforced between 10.00 pm and 04.00 am.

ix. In consequence of the variation of the 10.00 pm curfew, all bars, restaurants, and other establishments open to the public must now close by 9.00 pm.

x. In view of the restrictions within the hospitality sector, I further urge all operators of Hotels, Restaurants, Eateries, Bars and establishments that sell alcohol on wholesale or retail terms to do all that is necessary to ensure enhanced compliance with the Ministry of Health's Guidelines and Protocols.

xi. The directions governing religious gatherings remain unchanged: any indoor religious gathering other than for the purpose of a wedding or funeral shall have no more than one-third of its normal seating

capacity occupied at a given sitting. The Ministry of Health guidelines remain in force. The Ministry of Interior and Coordination of National Government is hereby directed to ensure strict enforcement.

xii. County governments to maintain isolation facilities in a state of preparedness through continuous capacity building for healthcare workers, provision of adequate PPEs for healthcare workers and continuous implementation of Infection Prevention and Control measures and provision of piped/portable oxygen.

xiii. Where there is an upsurge of COVID-19 cases in a specific County, the National Government will consult with the affected county to issue localized lockdowns and movement restrictions as may be necessary to stem the spread of the disease.

xiv. County governments and other relevant government agencies to enhance and strictly enforce all public health social measures including hand washing, social distancing and mandatory wearing of masks in public places. and;

xv. To enhance civic responsibility, the National and County Governments have resolved that going forward, services will not be rendered to any one who does not abide by the Ministry of Health protocols. In that regard, I call on the private sector to join the Government in the public sensitization campaign dubbed, “No mask, No service” “Bila barakoa, hakuna huduma”.

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I want to conclude by emphasizing again that our staying power in the fight against this pandemic should not succumb to the COVID fatigue. Both the leaders and the people must not backtrack in their vigilant observation of the health protocols. If public responsiveness to these protocols goes up, then enforcement becomes easy.

Finally, I must return to the issue of leadership. Without leadership, enforcement, civic responsiveness to COVID protocols and all necessary actions to beat this pandemic, will amount to nothing. That is why I call on leaders to stand out and be counted. And while at it, they must choose to take bold decision, instead of popular decisions, if the latter is good for country.

God Bless You. God Bless Kenya.