

**MEDIA BRIEF BY THE MINISTER OF INFORMATION,
PUBLICITY AND BROADCASTING SERVICES, HON MONICA
MUTSVANGWA 3 MAY 2020**

Good evening Zimbabwe

On 27 March 2020, His Excellency, President ED Mnangagwa announced that Zimbabwe was going into a total 21 Days lockdown. The country had to come to an abrupt stop in order to buy the nation time to slow down transmissions, while measures and preparations were being made on many fronts to cope and deal with the COVID19 pandemic. The total lockdown was our highest level of response to the pandemic. Our day to day lives drastically changed, but we persevered as a nation having chosen the route of abundant caution, whatever the costs and discomforts this route brought upon us.

As the total lockdown, Level 4, came to an end, the obtaining situation on the ground showed that Zimbabwe was yet to meet the conditions for lifting the lockdown that had been announced by the World Health Organisation (WHO). Key among these conditions was the need to have in place health systems that are capable to test, isolate, treat and trace every contact.

However, as considerable work had been undertaken, the lockdown was eased to level 3 where Government allowed the mining sector to resume or scale up operations, but within parameters set by the World Health Organisation regarding social distancing and other public health safety measures. Mining workers were also directed to remain with the precincts of their accommodation at workplaces for the duration of the lockdown.

Similarly, the manufacturing sector was also given the green light to resume limited operations under the same guidelines.

On Friday, 1 May, His Excellency, the President announced the further easing of lockdown regulations to level 2 which has opened the door for industry and commerce to resume operations, only if they have met the laid down regulations contained in the Statutory Instrument 99 of 2020.

First and foremost, those who are now allowed to resume operations are businesses in the formal commercial and industrial sector. What is recognized as formal are businesses that

- Hold a shop license or other license from a local authority and operate the business in question from a specified premise
- Are lessees of premises governed by the Commercial Premises (Lease Control) Act
- Are registered operators for the purpose of the Value Added Tax Act
- Are registered as an employer for the purpose of paying employees' tax under the Income Tax Act.
- Are parties to a collective bargaining agreement negotiated through an Employment Council governing the business in question.

If any question arises as to whether a business in the commercial and industrial sector is formal or not, the person purporting that the business or industry is formal shall have the burden of proving to the satisfaction of a health officer that the business is formal.

Those who fall under the above categories are only allowed to resume work for the first time during the lockdown when the employers and employees have been screened and tested for COVID19 at the direction

of enforcement officers using a test approved by the Ministry of Health and Child Care.

As announced by His Excellency, President ED Mnangagwa, the re-opening of industry and commerce is premised on mandatory testing of employers and employees, testing logistics will be as follows:

- To expedite the testing process, companies are encouraged to procure COVID19 rapid test kits for themselves, guided by the Ministry of Health and Child Care in terms of test kits specification.
- The recommended COVID19 rapid tests kits as approved by the Ministry of Health and Child Care.
- Employers must arrange with designated testing facilities (public and private) for their employees to be tested at an agreed time at the facilities or at the workplace
- For small organisations, the employees will go to the health facilities/ designated testing centres for their testing
- For larger organisations, arrangements will have to be made for testing to be conducted at the business premises by health officials from the testing institution, to avoid congestion at designated testing facilities
- Companies should ensure adequate space and conditions for testing (social distancing, infection prevention and control, hygiene, and privacy)
- The Ministry of Health and Child Care will provide standardized data collection tools for use during this screening process. All

designated testing facilities are to compile and submit daily reports to the Ministry.

The list of designated medical facilities is as follows:

- All Government health facilities
- All Mission hospitals
- All Municipality health facilities
- Designated Not for Profit institutions – New Start Centres
- Designated private institutions and laboratories – PSMI, Lancet laboratory, CIMAS.

I will reiterate, **it is criminal for any industry or business to open without having met the conditions set in SI 99**. The National Taskforce on COVID19 will be meeting industry and commerce on Monday, 4 May to work out the implementation modalities of the testing regime.

Under Level 2 the role of implementation and enforcement agents has also been increased to include:

- Physical inspection of business premises to ensure that protective and preventative measures (social distancing, the use of protective masks and hand sanitizing liquids by employees and other persons) are being practiced at the premises.
- To disperse and return home persons at any business or industry which does not meet the criteria set in SI 99
- The right of access to any land or premises during working hours to ensure the appropriate provisions of the lockdown order are being complied with

Any person who fails to comply with an order of enforcement officers under these regulations, hinders or obstructs an enforcement officer shall be guilty of an offence and is liable to fines not exceeding level twelve or to imprisonment for a period of not more than one year.

As more and more of us will be able to leave our homes to go to work let us not take this as a license to throw caution in the wind. COVID19 is still with us and as such let us continue to practice protective and preventative behavior as we go out and about. I am urging each and one of us to take the proper use of face masks seriously as this will go a long way in curbing the transmission of COVID19. Proper hygiene especially in the workplace is critical and we all have a responsibility to ensure that we protect ourselves and those around us from contacting or spreading the virus.

Donations

Government continues to applaud all those who have partnered with us in preparing and responding to the COVID19 threat. His Excellency, the President said that in line with the New Dispensation's thrust of accountability and transparency every donation would be recorded and accounted for. I am pleased to report that as from today a consolidated record of donations received towards the COVID19 response are now being made public and an updated record will be published regularly. I am urging all those who have donated towards this response to go and register these donations at their local Civil Protection Unit offices, these are housed under the Ministry of Local Government and Public Works.

Fellow Zimbabweans, the easing down our lockdown and containment measures does not mean that we are out of the woods yet. Level 2 comes with certain conditionalities. Let us all comply with these conditions and save our people and our nation. In the words of His Excellency, the

President, level 2 is designed to restart certain sectors of our economy, while recognizing the compelling credence in maintaining the lockdown.

Let us stay safe, wear our face masks, and practice good hygiene.

I thank you