



MINISTRY OF HEALTH

NATIONAL EMERGENCY RESPONSE COMMITTEE

ON CORONAVIRUS

UPDATE ON COVID-19 IN THE COUNTRY AND

RESPONSE MEASURES,

AS AT NOVEMBER 21, 2021

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BRIEF NO: 605A

My colleague Najib Balala, Cabinet Secretary in the

Ministry of Tourism and Wildlife,

Members of the press

Good afternoon and welcome to our today's briefing on the current status of Covid-19 in the country.

Fellow Kenyans,

It's been a while since we met to discuss our COVID-19 situation but I thank you for your continued support in relaying the critical information we give every day through our releases.

I am sure you have noticed that the country has been recording a decreasing number of COVID-19 cases countrywide over the last two months, with the positivity rate over the last 14 days ranging from 0.8% to 2.6%.

Measures adopted and implemented by the government have resulted in marked decrease in the number of reported severe cases and deaths, with the country recording **254,629 COVID-19** confirmed cases since March 2020 and **5,325** deaths within the same period. I have no doubt that looking at these statistics, it's

very easy to become complacent and fail to appreciate the magnitude of the problem that we still face with the pandemic.

Let me put some things in context first. The current decline in the number of new infections may be attributed to a buildup of immunity both through natural exposure to the disease and the ongoing vaccination exercise. Nonetheless, we know that it's not yet time for us to celebrate.

Why?

We must take our cue from the rest of the world and learn from them. A worrisome epidemiological picture is emerging in European countries like the Netherlands, Austria, France, Belgium, United Kingdom, Australia and the USA, where new COVID-19 urges are being observed despite successful vaccination campaigns.

Case numbers have soared across the European continent over the last month with the worrying trend continuing. On Friday last week, the WHO reported that nearly two million cases were reported across Europe in the previous week, — which is the

largest number the region has had in a single week since the pandemic began.

Governments in these countries are debating whether to reimpose strong restrictions as we head into the festive season, and so should we. We know that during festive periods, many of the known mitigation measures against the virus such as social distancing can easily get overlooked as people make merry. It's a time for people to hug, shake hands and hold each other as they connect thereby making nonsense of the critical social distancing, masking up and washing hand principles.

In the rest of the world, measures being considered in some of the countries include lockdown in Austria, for those who aren't fully vaccinated, and restrictions on conferences and events in China's capital city of Beijing, and total lockdowns in Netherlands.

Media reports indicate that starting tomorrow, Slovakia is banning people who haven't been vaccinated from all nonessential stores and shopping malls. They will also not be

allowed to attend any public event or gathering and will be required to test twice a week just to go to work. We must take note not to have to go the same way as well.

It's becoming increasingly apparent that as countries battle the pandemic, a lot more emphasis is being placed on the need to have more and more people vaccinated. Vaccination is a critical pillar in the control of the pandemic as a long-term solution to prevention of severe cases of the disease, deaths, and an enabler for a return to normalcy.

We know that in most countries, including our own, most of the people who are hospitalized are those who aren't yet vaccinated. In our case, over 95% of all those hospitalized are unvaccinated meaning those vaccinated stand a better chance of fighting and avoiding severe disease.

Reduced infection rates and increased vaccination are two important ingredients in the continued opening of the economy. Indeed, we have noticed that over the last weeks since the lifting

of curfew and the revision of several of the other containment measures, the economy has been on an upward trajectory with very good signs of full recovery. We are largely a service economy, dependent a lot on people-to-people interactions hence the need to ensure the interactions remain safe.

As you might be aware, I have been out of the country these last few weeks and I have observed an increased trend towards heightened vaccination efforts in many countries. We have started seeing more and more countries requiring people visiting to not only have COVID-19 negative tests but also show proof of being vaccinated, not partially, but rather fully vaccinated.

It's very important that we are not left behind in this new world order especially because we are a tourism destination of choice for many across the world. We need to demonstrate to the world that we stand in solidarity in the use of vaccines as a mitigation tool against COVID-19 as we welcome visitors to our parks, beaches and hotels.

It is worth noting that our COVID-19 vaccination program continues to make good and steady progress towards our herd immunity goal and coverage targets.

I am pleased to note that we have so far received 10.7 million covid-19 vaccine doses and administered nearly 6.4 million vaccinations. I am happy to report that among our priority groups 88% of our health workers and 79% of our teachers are now fully vaccinated.

We are however concerned that only 18% of the elderly population is fully vaccinated and that vaccine uptake has generally slowed down in several counties following the lifting of the curfew last month.

We are particularly concerned by the low uptake of Covid19 vaccines in counties with high population densities like Siaya, Meru, Bungoma, Busia, Migori, Kakamega and Homa bay where full vaccination status is below 5%.

Let me remind Kenyans that our overall goal of achieving herd immunity is vaccinating at least 30 million Kenyans before the end of next year. This means that beyond our adult population, we must also vaccinate the young people who in most cases, though not bearing the burden of the disease, are the main carriers and therefore spreaders of the virus. As such, it is important to get them vaccinated to reduce their chances of transmitting the virus.

We are in a good place now to consider extending vaccination to this group because in addition to the 10.7 million doses that we have so far received, we are scheduled to receive another 8 million doses of various vaccines.

Together with this marked improvement of our vaccine supply situation in the country, Pharmacy and Poisons Board has reviewed and given Emergency Use Authorization for the administration of Pfizer vaccines for all persons 12 years of age and above as recommended by WHO. We are expecting 4million doses of this vaccine which will be administered to the teenagers.

The global consensus is that convincing as many people as possible to get vaccinated should be a top priority.

Following a review of the prevailing situation in the country, and in addition to the current existing mitigation measures as pronounced by His Excellency the president in his Mashujaa day address to the country, and taking into account the very critical need of ensuring the country remains on track in the containment of the disease, the following strategies are proposed for implementation;

1. Everybody seeking in person government services should be fully vaccinated and proof of vaccination availed by December 21st 2021.

Such services will include but not limited to: KRA services, Education, Immigration Services, Hospital and Prison Visitation, NTSA and Port Services among others.

In order to accelerate vaccination, the Ministry in collaboration with County Governments and other stakeholders will be undertaking a ten-day mass vaccination exercise from November 26th with the aim of administering adequate vaccines to as many people as possible.

2. Counties should

- a. take up testing at facilities by increasing the capacity of clinicians to detect and test those that present with symptoms.
- b. Ramp up vaccination by integrating COVID-19 vaccination activity into routine clinical services and public health services such as during Ward rounds, routine and special clinics,
- c. Continue providing water and soap for use at public places for hand washing and sanitization, and
- d. provide vaccination services through outreach during market days, days of worship and other approved occasions and events.

3. When seeking transport services, clients should;

- a. show proof of vaccination when using domestic flights,
- b. show proof of vaccination before use of train services (SGR),
- c. show proof of vaccination before boarding buses/matatus for all regional travelers.

- d. all motorable operators, that is Drivers, Conductors, Bodaboda riders, Pilots, Air Hostesses and all others working in the sector should be fully vaccinated and carry proof of vaccination at all times.

All these measures in the sector are to be coordinated by the Ministry of Transport and in collaboration with relevant stakeholders

4. In Public Spaces,

- a. Show proof of vaccination for admission into National Parks & Game Reserves, Hotels, Bars & Restaurants.
- b. All businesses, including Small and Medium Enterprises serving 50 or more people a day to put up signage requiring proof of vaccination before entry into their premises and their patron's to be fully vaccinated.

- c. All indoor gatherings to be limited to two thirds capacity with proof of COVID-19 vaccination of all in attendance.

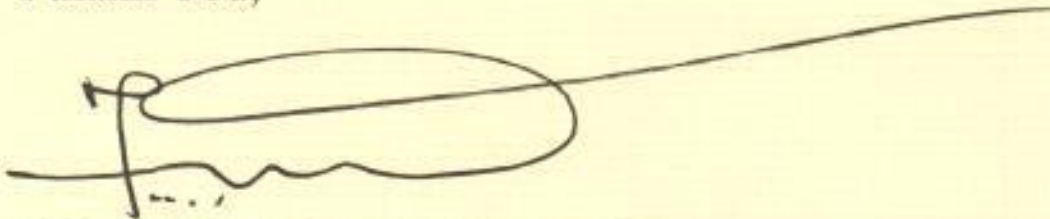
We are appealing to the Interfaith Council to review and adapt these new measures as appropriate.

5. For those travelling this festive season, be wary of symptoms related to COVID-19 and seek medical care immediately to protect your loved ones at the village and in the city.
6. Visitors/Tourists/Travelers from the European region **MUST** be fully vaccinated and provide proof of vaccination before entry into the country.
7. In view of the Emergency Use Authorization by PPB and following WHO recommendation, I direct that we open vaccination of young people with Pfizer from Tuesday the 23rd of November 2021, lowering the applicable age to 15 years and above. The estimated population in this group is approximately 5.7million.

Finally, all Kenyans are advised to continue to strictly adhere to the regular Public Health and Social Measures including proper use of face masks, social distancing, handwashing or use of hand sanitizers at all times.

Let us guard from a spike in infections and severe disease, all of us, together.

I thank You,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of a large, stylized loop followed by a long horizontal stroke that tapers to the right.

SEN. MUTAHI KAGWE, EGH
CABINET SECRETARY/CHAIRPERSON.