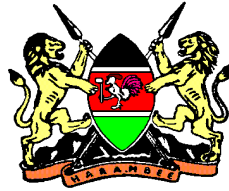


REPUBLIC OF KENYA
DEPUTY PRESIDENT



WE SHALL OVERCOME: STATEMENT ON COVID-19 PANDEMIC

Fellow Kenyans,

I address you at a time like no other time in our memory. This year's Easter is going to be drastically different in many significant ways, but its message remains the same. After the trials, sorrow and gloom that comes with the crucifixion of Christ on Friday, there is assured hope that rises with His resurrection on Sunday. Our current situation has brought us its share of tribulation and heartbreak, but what a better time for us to consider our blessed hope in Almighty God for the assured victory ahead!

2. We are in a new place, confronting a situation that is wholly unprecedented in our time. We have never been here before. Our children are all out of school. The favourite matatu and bodaboda rider, reliable mama mboga, that dependable barber or salonist are all facing serious challenges. Our airline industry is grounded.

Hotels have shut their doors. We can no longer attend places of worship as we always did. This is phenomenal. And the cause of all this is the novel coronavirus, a minute fragment of inert genetic code.

3. Fortunately for us, defeating this virus, which has occasioned so much suffering, mayhem and disruption on a scale never witnessed in recent history does not require the nuclear bomb, mighty armies, or fighter jets. Simple behavioural and hygiene measures ; avoiding handshakes, washing hands with soap, sanitising, wearing masks, social distancing, staying at home simple as they seem guarantee us a decisive knockout blow against the virus.

4. The fight against coronavirus is a paradox. While on the one hand, we have a deadly virus that threatens to wipe out people and disrupt the world on a scale never before experienced, defeating it completely on the other hand takes such basic measures and elementary precautions.

We must not be confused by the simplicity of washing hands, social distancing and staying home to underestimate the deadly, dangerous and destructive coronavirus.

5. Let us remember that the coronavirus cannot move, or multiply by itself. It desperately needs our bodies for mobility, for transport from one victim to another, and from one locality to another. Curtailing our movements will completely immobilise this enemy and stop its spread.

6. This is why we urge those who can work from home to do so while those who must work in factories, offices, business spaces and such other areas to meticulously exercise social distancing. Employers should adopt a shift system that enable staff to work at different times of day, or on different days to minimise congestion in work places. And unless it is absolutely necessary with compelling and extraordinary reasons, we should stay at home.

7. This is also the case for the restriction of movement into and out of Nairobi, Kwale, Kilifi and Mombasa counties where the highest incidence of Covid-19 have been reported.

These simple steps: avoiding handshakes and unnecessary contact with bodies and surfaces, regularly washing hands with soap, sanitising, keeping a safe social distance, wearing masks, avoiding unnecessary movement and staying at home, are the most effective arsenal against the deadly coronavirus and will be part of how we live and relate for the foreseeable future.

8. As Government, we appreciate and commend the millions of Kenyans who have taken these directions seriously and are conscientiously complying with the protocols as issued and updated by our health ministry.

Those not committed to these measures should know that they are putting their own lives, those of their families, friends and millions of other Kenya at death risk. This kind of reckless negligence is unacceptable.

9. To protect ourselves, every Kenyan should go the extra mile, and perform the patriotic duty of ensuring that their families, friends, workmates and neighbours adhere to these protocols. We must not negotiate our safety and survival. Let us be our brothers keeper.

Many Kenyans are asking us, “While government is telling us what to do, what is government doing about the Covid-19 pandemic?”

10. President Kenyatta has taken personal charge of this situation and mobilised government at both levels, together with development partners, the private sector and friends of Kenya to accomplish a number of objectives.

a) Our first key task is to assemble and provide a body of accurate and verifiable information to the public and to work with all partners on its dissemination so as to empower citizens to take the right decisions and make the correct choices. Information on the nature, threat and remedies of the novel coronavirus and Covid-19 at this point in time is the foremost duty of the government, given that citizen behaviour and action is at the heart of defeating this epidemic. Success stories around the world indicate strongly that effective management of Covid-19 is attributable to availability of accurate information and efficient public uptake, use and response.

b) In preparation for the possible escalation of numbers of Covid-19 cases from the hundreds into the thousands, the government has designated and equipped different hospital facilities, which include the 600-bed capacity Kenyatta University Teaching, Referral and Research Hospital in Nairobi while every County has been tasked to do the same with their health facilities. Further, we have directed the Ministry of Education to work with counties to identify boarding schools that can be used as isolation facilities for Covid-19 cases.

c) The government is working with counties through KEMSA to stockpile medical supplies necessary for management of cases of Covid-19 in diagnosed persons while the public services commission is undertaking recruitment of additional health personnel, including 1000 doctors to be advertised this week, so as to build adequate capacity to manage increased numbers of Covid-19 victims.

d) The statistics released by the Ministry of Health on the number of persons infected so far has come mainly from the testing of persons in quarantine and their known contacts. The testing process at the moment is slow and Limited. We are working with the World Health Organization and Africa center for disease control

on the approval of rapid diagnostic kits produced by international and local institutions including KEMRI to scale up our testing.

Once approved, these diagnostic kits will enable the government to carry out mass testing of Kenyans which is necessary to capture all those infected by the virus for isolation, containment and management. This exercise is critical for us to adequately and comprehensively respond and manage this pandemic.

e) We are working with international partners including the World Bank and the private sector on the acquisition of additional ventilators, sanitisers and masks with the aim of enhancing our capabilities and preparedness. KeBS has provided standards for production for these items and local manufacturers should produce what they can en masse without any further delay. We are also scaling up oxygen supply to all the 94 hospitals under the MES program for use by patients who may need supplementary oxygen.

f) This crisis has completely disrupted our lives and taken away everything we took for granted. “Normal” is a word we have to rapidly unlearn and, hopefully relearn in the future after coronavirus. Yet if we think that our lives have been disrupted, the world for healthcare workers has been turned upside down; inside out. More than anyone else, this crisis demands that frontline healthcare workers give not just their best but that they give their all continuously. They have to be away from their families so that we may be with ours. They have to come into close contact with infected persons so that we may remain safe.

While all of us are soldiers in this army against Covid-19, our generals, crack units and elite fighters at the frontline are our healthcare professionals.

11. To ensure that our community health workers, nurses, clinical officers, paramedics, laboratory technicians, pharmacists and doctors, perform their duties without them being compromised, Personal Protective gear is being made available and in adequate quantities. To ensure sustained supply of these PPEs, local manufacturing capacity has been identified and contracted.

12. To assist our healthcare workers who have demonstrated inspiring selflessness and diligence under extremely stressful and challenging conditions, let us rigorously observe the protocols set out by the Ministry of Health so as not to overburden them with unnecessary and avoidable incidences of infection. Let us also remember them and their families in our daily prayers and in every other way that we can.

13. As His Excellency President Uhuru Kenyatta directed, our Treasury team is working with the legislature to re-align our budget to make resources available for various interventions in combating the pandemic. Provision of water especially in our towns and particularly informal settlements will be a key consideration. The identification of vulnerable groups who may require food subsidies have been mapped out by our national government coordination staff in consultations with all counties to ensure timely target intervention if this situation escalates.

We encourage Parliament in their patriotic mandate to exercise imagination commensurate with the magnitude of the challenge we face.

14. As government makes efforts to mitigate the suffering of the people through a raft of measures already announced, I wish to appeal to the private sector to be compassionate, understanding and forbearing with our people and particularly to employers to make necessary adjustments on non-core expenses to safeguard jobs and to endeavour not to lay off staff.

I also appeal to the financial services sector, and more specifically the banking industry, to be equally understanding and consider instituting loan interest moratoria, suspend foreclosure on property and work out a framework to renegotiate loans with borrowers as requested by the government.

15. Equally, we encourage our county governments and assemblies to re align their budgets and redirect their resources towards interventions to manage this epidemic and its socioeconomic ramifications, and especially to the vulnerable.

16. Our farmers, in their millions, should come out strongly and take advantage of the good rains that we continue to experience and grow as much food as possible. County governments are urged to work with the national government to coordinate extension, mechanisation and other enabling services.

We also acknowledge the exemplary coverage by the media who have gone to great lengths to facilitate dissemination of information that has enhanced public knowledge of this pandemic.

17. We have also tasked health officials in counties to proactively issue guidelines for food supply chains to control the handling of farm produce including vegetables and fruits, as well as commercial crops like miraa. The continued supply of fresh produce and food in its entirety is important for our collective health.

18. Finally, though we are going to celebrate this Easter weekend differently , we must remind ourselves that Jesus was persecuted, betrayed, crucified, and that he ultimately died and was buried. But he triumphed over death. His resurrection is the reason for our hope of eternal life. I call on the Christian community to lift up our nation in prayer this Easter period and equally ask Kenyans of all faiths to commend our nation to God's unfailing mercy and grace for us to overcome this daunting pandemic
God bless you all.

H.E WILLIAM RUTO E.G.H., E.B.S