

MEDIA STATEMENT

TO : ALL MEDIA/NEWS EDITORS

DATE : 04 APRIL 2020

PRESIDENTIAL COORDINATING COUNCIL ALIGNS NATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19

President Cyril Ramaphosa convened a special meeting of the Presidential Coordinating Council (PCC) today, 4 April 2020. This was the first virtual meeting of the structure and was called to assess progress and challenges on the implementation of the nationwide lockdown to stop the spread of the coronavirus. The meeting further sought to begin engagements between national and provincial governments towards an economic recovery strategy.

Co-chaired by the Deputy President, the Presidential Coordinating Council is composed of Ministers, Premiers of all provinces and the South African Local Government Association (SALGA). The PCC received a report from the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NatJoints) covering amongst other issues, adherence to the national lockdown regulations, ongoing contact tracing, accommodation requirements including identified quarantine sites and the roll out of the mass community testing programme.

To date, 5400 field workers have been trained and have already been deployed to various areas across the country, whilst thousands more are still to undergo training. Priority districts and 993 wards have been identified, composed of the most vulnerable and at risk communities as well as areas with high rates of infection. Provinces are working with the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) to identify testing sites which will include both fixed and mobile test facilities.

Through the COVID-19 Data Management Centre, government is receiving early warning of potential clusters of infections and thus deploying pre-emptive targeted testing in identified areas. It further receives daily estimates on infections, assesses local healthcare capacity and the efficacy of the lockdown.

The PCC further considered the security of supply of essential medical supplies including regulations that have been established to restrict exports of essential medical goods. Government is ramping up efforts to build-up local manufacturing capacity and assessing the capacity of State Owned Entities to produce essential supplies.

The PCC acknowledged the work done by the Department of Water and Sanitation to increase access to water through the delivery of water tanks and tankers across the country with more than 6000 tanks and 723 tankers delivered to date. It is expected that this programme will be significantly escalated in the coming days and weeks and further maintained when the pandemic has passed.

Delivering their provincial reports, the Premiers have stressed the need for greater coordination and communications around the national state of disaster regulations across all levels of government and reaffirmed the regulations as gazetted as binding, uniformly across the country.

The PCC appreciated the clarity provided on the recent amendments to the lockdown regulations relating to informal traders and public transport, particularly minibus taxis. SALGA has confirmed the readiness of municipalities to assist in the issuing of permit to informal traders and spaza shop owners. Municipalities also stand ready to assist and handover some of their facilities for isolation and quarantine.

President Ramaphosa has commended national, provincial and local government for the concerted measures to provide relief to the most vulnerable communities, informal sector workers and indigent households during this period. While appreciating the hardship and inconvenience the national lockdown has caused, the President has reasserted that, across the world, it has been countries that have imposed restrictions on movement and gatherings that have managed to flatten the curve.

The President has urged government and society at large to build on the tremendous impetus provided by the need to respond to the coronavirus pandemic to rethink how governments, businesses and communities function and relate to each other. “The coronavirus changes everything,” President Ramaphosa said.

The Presidential Coordinating Council will be meeting frequently to ensure alignment on the national response to the coronavirus pandemic.

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Issued by the Presidency of the Republic of South Africa

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