



***ADDRESS BY H.E. MUHAMMADU BUHARI,
PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA
ON THE COVID- 19 PANDEMIC.
SUNDAY 29TH MARCH, 2020***

1. Fellow Nigerians,
2. From the first signs that Coronavirus, or COVID-19 was turning into an epidemic and was officially declared a world-wide emergency, the Federal Government started planning preventive, containment and curative measures in the event the disease hits Nigeria.
3. The whole instruments of government are now mobilized to confront what has now become both a health emergency and an economic crisis.
4. Nigeria, unfortunately, confirmed its first case on 27th February 2020. Since then, we have seen the number of confirmed cases rise slowly.
5. By the morning of March 29th, 2020, the total confirmed cases within Nigeria had risen to ninety-seven.
6. Regrettably, we also had our first fatality, a former employee of PPMC, who died on 23rd March 2020. Our thoughts and prayers are with his family in this very difficult time. We also pray for quick recovery for those infected and undergoing treatment.

7. As of today, COVID-19 has no cure. Scientists around the world are working very hard to develop a vaccine.

8. We are in touch with these institutions as they work towards a solution that will be certified by international and local medical authorities within the shortest possible time.

9. For now, the best and most efficient way to avoid getting infected is through regular hygienic and sanitary practices as well as social distancing.

10. As individuals, we remain the greatest weapon to fight this pandemic. By washing our hands regularly with clean water and soap, disinfecting frequently used surfaces and areas, coughing into a tissue or elbow and strictly adhering to infection prevention control measures in health facilities, we can contain this virus.

11. Since the outbreak was reported in China, our Government has been monitoring the situation closely and studying the various responses adopted by other countries.

12. Indeed, the Director General of the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control (NCDC) was one of ten global health leaders invited by the World Health Organisation to visit China and understudy their response approach. I am personally very proud of Dr Ihekweazu for doing this on behalf of all Nigerians.

13. Since his return, the NCDC has been implementing numerous strategies and programs in Nigeria to ensure that the adverse impact of this virus on our country is minimized.

We ask all Nigerians to support the work the Federal Ministry of Health and NCDC are doing, led by the Presidential Task Force.

14. Although we have adopted strategies used globally, our implementation programs have been tailored to reflect our local realities.

15. In Nigeria, we are taking a two step approach.

16. First, to protect the lives of our fellow Nigerians and residents living here and second, to preserve the livelihoods of workers and business owners to ensure their families get through this very difficult time in dignity and with hope and peace of mind.

17. To date, we have introduced healthcare measures, border security, fiscal and monetary policies in our response. We shall continue to do so as the situation unfolds.

18. Some of these measures will surely cause major inconveniences to many citizens. But these are sacrifices we should all be willing and ready to make for the greater good of our country.

19. In Nigeria's fight against COVID-19, there is no such thing as an overreaction or an under reaction. It is all about the right reaction by the right agencies and trained experts.

20. Accordingly, as a Government, we will continue to rely on guidance of our medical professionals and experts at the Ministry of Health, NCDC and other relevant agencies through this difficult time.

21. I therefore urge all citizens to adhere to their guidelines as they are released from time to time.

22. As we are all aware, Lagos and Abuja have the majority of confirmed cases in Nigeria. Our focus therefore remains to urgently and drastically contain these cases, and to support other states and regions in the best way we can.

23. This is why we provided an initial intervention of fifteen billion Naira (N15b) to support the national response as we fight to contain and control the spread.

24. We also created a Presidential Task Force (PTF) to develop a workable National Response Strategy that is being reviewed on a daily basis as the requirements change. This strategy takes international best practices but adopts them to suit our unique local circumstances.

25. Our goal is to ensure all States have the right support and manpower to respond immediately.

26. So far, in Lagos and Abuja, we have recruited hundreds of adhoc staff to man our call centers and support our tracing and testing efforts.

27. I also requested, through the Nigeria Governors Forum, for all State Governments to nominate Doctors and Nurses who will be trained by the NCDC and Lagos State Government on tactical and operational response to the virus in case it spreads to other states.

28. This training will also include medical representatives from our armed forces, paramilitary and security and intelligence agencies.

29. As a nation, our response must be guided, systematic and professional. There is a need for consistency across the nation.

All inconsistencies in policy guidelines between Federal and State agencies will be eliminated.

30. As I mentioned earlier, as at this morning we had ninety-seven confirmed cases. Majority of these are in Lagos and Abuja. All the confirmed cases are getting the necessary medical care.

31. Our agencies are currently working hard to identify cases and people these patients have been in contact with.

32. The few confirmed cases outside Lagos and Abuja are linked to persons who have travelled from these centres.

33. We are therefore working to ensure such inter state and intercity movements are restricted to prevent further spread.

34. Based on the advice of the Federal Ministry of Health and the NCDC, I am directing the cessation of all movements in Lagos and the FCT for an initial period of 14 days with effect from 11pm on Monday, 30th March 2020. This restriction will also apply to Ogun State due to its close proximity to Lagos and the high traffic between the two States.

35. All citizens in these areas are to stay in their homes. Travel to or from other states should be postponed. All businesses and offices within these locations should be fully closed during this period.

36. The Governors of Lagos and Ogun States as well as the Minister of the FCT have been notified. Furthermore, heads of security and intelligence agencies have also been briefed.

37. We will use this containment period to identify, trace and isolate all individuals that have come into contact with confirmed cases. We will ensure the treatment of confirmed cases while restricting further spread to other States.

38. This order does not apply to hospitals and all related medical establishments as well as organizations in health care related manufacturing and distribution.

39. Furthermore, commercial establishments such as;

- a. food processing, distribution and retail companies;
- b. petroleum distribution and retail entities,
- c. power generation, transmission and distribution companies; and
- d. private security companies are also exempted.

40. Although these establishments are exempted, access will be restricted and monitored.

41. Workers in telecommunication companies, broadcasters, print and electronic media staff who can prove they are unable to work from home are also exempted.

42. All seaports in Lagos shall remain operational in accordance with the guidelines I issued earlier. Vehicles and drivers conveying essential cargoes from these Ports to other parts of the country will be screened thoroughly before departure by the Ports Health Authority.

43. Furthermore, all vehicles conveying food and other essential humanitarian items into these locations from other parts of the country will also be screened thoroughly before they are allowed to enter these restricted areas.

44. Accordingly, the Hon. Minister of Health is hereby directed to redeploy all Port Health Authority employees previously stationed in the Lagos and Abuja Airports to key roads that serve as entry and exit points to these restricted zones.

45. Movements of all passenger aircraft, both commercial and private jets, are hereby suspended. Special permits will be issued on a needs basis.

46. We are fully aware that such measures will cause much hardship and inconvenience to many citizens. But this is a matter of life and death, if we look at the dreadful daily toll of deaths in Italy, France and Spain.

47. However, we must all see this as our national and patriotic duty to control and contain the spread of this virus. I will therefore ask all of us affected by this order to put aside our personal comfort to safeguard ourselves and fellow human beings. This common enemy can only be controlled if we all come together and obey scientific and medical advice.

48. As we remain ready to enforce these measures, we should see this as our individual contribution in the war against COVID-19. Many other countries have taken far stricter measures in a bid to control the spread of the virus with positive results.

49. For residents of satellite and commuter towns and communities around Lagos and Abuja whose livelihoods will surely be affected by some of these restrictive measures, we shall deploy relief materials to ease their pains in the coming weeks.

50. Furthermore, although schools are closed, I have instructed the Ministry of Humanitarian Affairs, Disaster Management and Social

Development to work with State Governments in developing a strategy on how to sustain the school feeding program during this period without compromising our social distancing policies. The Minister will be contacting the affected States and agree on detailed next steps.

51. Furthermore, I have directed that a three month repayment moratorium for all TraderMoni, MarketMoni and FarmerMoni loans be implemented with immediate effect.

52. I have also directed that a similar moratorium be given to all Federal Government funded loans issued by the Bank of Industry, Bank of Agriculture and the Nigeria Export Import Bank.

53. For on-lending facilities using capital from international and multilateral development partners, I have directed our development financial institutions to engage these development partners and negotiate concessions to ease the pains of the borrowers.

54. For the most vulnerable in our society, I have directed that the conditional cash transfers for the next two months be paid immediately. Our Internally displaced persons will also receive two months of food rations in the coming weeks.

55. We also call on all Nigerians to take personal responsibility to support those who are vulnerable within their communities, helping them with whatever they may need.

56. As we all pray for the best possible outcome, we shall continue planning for all eventualities.

57. This is why I directed that all Federal Government Stadiums, Pilgrims camps and other facilities be converted to isolation centers and makeshift hospitals.

58. My fellow Nigerians, as a Government, we will avail all necessary resources to support the response and recovery. We remain committed to do whatever it takes to confront COVID-19 in our country.

59. We are very grateful to see the emerging support of the private sector and individuals to the response as well as our development partners.

60. At this point, I will ask that all contributions and donations be coordinated and centralized to ensure efficient and impactful spending. The Presidential Task Force remains the central coordinating body on the COVID-19 response.

61. I want to assure you all that Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies with a role to play in the outbreak response are working hard to bring this virus under control.

62. Every nation in the world is challenged at this time. But we have seen countries where citizens have come together to reduce the spread of the virus.

63. I will therefore implore you again to strictly comply with the guidelines issued and also do your bit to support Government and the most vulnerable in your communities.

64. I will take this opportunity to thank all our public health workforce, health care workers, port health authorities and other essential staff on

the frontlines of the response for their dedication and commitment. You are true heroes.

65. I thank you all for listening. May God continue to bless and protect us all.

President Muhammadu Buhari

President, Federal Republic of Nigeria.

29th March 2020.

