



**STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA ON PROGRESS
IN THE NATIONAL EFFORT TO CONTAIN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**TUYNHUY, CAPE TOWN
11 JULY 2021**

My Fellow South Africans,

Two weeks ago I announced a set of additional measures to contain the spread of the coronavirus.

In deciding to introduce these additional measures, Cabinet followed scientific advice provided by the Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19 and deliberations of the National Coronavirus Command Council.

These measures were urgent and they were absolutely necessary to contain the third wave, which is being fuelled by the new Delta variant.

It remains our priority to break the chain of transmission by limiting social contact.

For the last two weeks, the country has been on adjusted alert level 4.

This was indicative of a high risk of transmission.

When I last addressed you, I indicated that we would assess the situation after 14 days and determine what adjustments may be required.

As things stand now, infections remain extremely high.

With the fast-spreading Delta variant, we are experiencing a third wave that is more severe than the first and second waves.

For the last two weeks, the country has consistently recorded an average of nearly 20,000 daily new cases.

At present, the country has over 200,000 active COVID-19 cases.

In the last two weeks over 4,200 South Africans have lost their lives to COVID-19.

While Gauteng accounts for more than half of new infections, infections are rapidly increasing in the Western Cape, Limpopo, North West, KwaZulu-Natal and Mpumalanga.

Our health system countrywide remains under pressure.

By next week, daily hospital admissions across the country are likely to reach the levels observed during the peak of the first two waves.

COVID-19 related deaths in hospitals are also increasing, and have surpassed those observed at the peak of the first wave.

Consequently, Cabinet after consultation with the provinces has decided to maintain the country at Adjusted Alert Level 4 for another 14 days.

This means that from now until the 25th of July, the following measures will remain in place.

- All social, political, religious and other gatherings remain prohibited.
- A curfew remains in place from 9pm until 4am, and only those with permission to do so may leave their homes during this time.
- The sale of alcohol remains prohibited.
- Schools will remain closed until the 26th of July.
- It remains mandatory to wear a mask that covers your nose and mouth whenever you are in public.

We are however making the following adjustments to the Alert Level 4 regulations:

- Restaurants and eateries will be able to operate while observing strict health protocols. Such establishments may not accommodate more than 50 people at a time or, for smaller venues, more than 50 per cent of their normal capacity.
- Certain other venues, such as gyms and fitness centres, may also open and activities such as agricultural livestock and game auctions will be allowed, subject to the conditions outlined in regulations.

Since the onset of the pandemic, our national response has been guided by the latest available evidence and the advice of experts.

Here is what we know.

We know that reducing the instances where people are in close proximity to others helps to contain infections.

We know that the coronavirus spreads at funerals, at office meetings, at parties, at family occasions, and at restaurants and taverns.

That is why, at adjusted alert level 4, we have had to prohibit religious, social and political gatherings.

We also know that as more people move, the virus moves with them.

Because of the relatively high numbers in Gauteng two weeks ago, we limited movement in and out of the province to slow the spread of the virus to other parts of the country.

We know that curfews reduce movement and limit late-night social gatherings that increase the potential for transmission.

We know that restrictions on alcohol sales reduce the number of admissions at hospitals and emergency rooms with alcohol-related trauma, such as motor vehicle accidents and interpersonal violence.

Reducing alcohol harm frees up much-needed capacity in our health facilities to deal with COVID-19 cases.

Alcohol abuse is also associated with gatherings and non-adherence to public health regulations.

At the same time, we know and recognise the vital contribution of the alcohol industry to our economy.

Ultimately, the most important measures to limit transmission are those that are within our individual control.

Because the Delta variant is more transmissible, we need to be far more diligent in following the basic precautions with which we are all familiar.

As we implement measures to limit the number of infections, we are acting to protect as many people as possible through vaccination.

Our national vaccination programme is expanding at a rapid pace.

To date, over 4.2 million people in South Africa have received a vaccine dose, with one million of these having been done over the past seven weekdays.

The pace of vaccination has more than doubled in the last month, and will continue to increase.

Presently, nearly 190,000 people are on average being vaccinated each weekday.

Government and the private sector are working together in an unprecedented way to build additional capacity to vaccinate many more people a day.

We are currently vaccinating both the 60+ and 50+ age groups.

From this coming Thursday, the 15th of July, those over 35 years of age will be able to register on the Electronic Vaccination Data System.

On the 1st of August we hope to commence with vaccinations for the 35+ group.

Programmes are underway to vaccinate essential workers, starting with basic education, the police and the defence force.

The Department of Health is also working with the private sector to implement workplace vaccination programmes that can expand our capacity beyond public sites.

We are working to ensure that vaccination sites are located closer to where people live to make it easier for them.

We will continue to work with community, religious and traditional leaders to mobilise communities to get vaccinated.

Plans are in place in all provinces to expand many sites to vaccinate either six or seven days of the week.

This will be achieved by the provision of funds for overtime and the recruitment of additional medical staff and health science students.

All those who qualify for vaccination are encouraged to pre-register to speed up the process at vaccination sites.

However, all sites do also allow unregistered people to walk in and be registered.

I want to encourage all South Africans who are eligible to register to do so and get their vaccine.

We need to spread the message that vaccines work and that they are effective.

One of the major challenges we have faced so far in expanding our vaccination programme is the availability of vaccine doses.

This has been a challenge both for South Africa and the rest of the African continent.

In the last few days, the African Union, through our office as the AU COVID-19 Champion, and the European Union have reached a historic agreement that will significantly improve the supply of vaccines to our country and our sister countries on the African continent.

Through this agreement, Aspen will be delivering over 17 million Johnson & Johnson vaccine doses to South Africa and other African countries over the next three months, commencing in late July.

This number will double monthly from October.

Initial stock running into millions of doses will be released in both South Africa and other African countries from July.

As part of the effort to strengthen health security on the continent, there is a commitment by Johnson & Johnson to adapt the current arrangement so that we can produce the vaccine in South Africa under license rather than under contract, resulting in our country and the continent having control over the vaccines.

We are negotiating that in time the drug substance itself would be produced here in South Africa, so that we have a fully-owned African vaccine manufactured on African soil in a number of countries on our continent.

We welcome the announcement by President Joe Biden that the United States is donating 15-20 million doses of the Pfizer vaccine to African countries through the COVAX facility.

These developments, together with our current agreements with manufacturers, means that South Africa should have a pipeline of vaccine supplies sufficient to meet our vaccination target.

At the same time, we are working to expand the range of vaccines being used in the country.

We welcome the decision by SAHPRA to approve the CoronaVac vaccine from China for use in South Africa.

The Vaccine Advisory Committee is working on how soon we can bring CoronaVac into the vaccination programme.

We have had to make difficult decisions, knowing that almost every decision carries a cost to the economy and society.

Despite the economic impact of these restrictions, we need to appreciate that it is the pandemic itself that poses the greatest threat to economic recovery.

A prolonged period of uncontrolled infections would cause far greater economic damage than the restrictions put in place, disrupting production and deterring people from venturing out to entertainment venues and public spaces.

We recognise, however, that these restrictions have had consequences for individuals, for households, and for businesses that were already under pressure before the pandemic.

We remain committed to do all that we can to mitigate the impact of the lockdown on people's livelihoods.

Following the move to Alert Level 4, the Unemployment Insurance Fund embarked on negotiations with social partners to address the difficulties that employees who lost income under these restrictions.

On the basis of these discussions, the UIF has decided that the COVID-19 TERS scheme should be extended to sectors that are affected by Adjusted Level 4 restrictions.

The details of the extension will be published shortly following the finalisation of the full scheme, which will include further details on who is eligible for this support.

Since its inception last year, the COVID-19 TERS scheme has already provided more than R60 billion to protect the jobs of 5.5 million workers.

In addition, Cabinet has decided that all business licenses and permits that expired between March 2020 and June 2021 will remain valid until 31 December 2022.

New business licenses or permits that are issued from the 1st of July will also be valid until 31 December 2022, and no license fee will be payable.

This will provide some relief to small businesses.

Fellow South Africans,

There is another matter of great national importance that I wish to address.

In the past few days, we have seen sporadic but increasingly violent protests in some parts of the country.

Key infrastructure like national roads have been affected, slowing down the transportation of goods and services that keep our economy running.

Property has been destroyed. Cars have been stoned. People have been intimidated and threatened, and some have even been hurt.

These acts are endangering lives and damaging our efforts to rebuild the economy.

Our Constitution guarantees everyone's right to freely express themselves and to engage in peaceful protest.

While there are those who may be hurt and angry at this moment, there can never be any justification for such violent, destructive and disruptive actions.

It is a matter of concern to all South Africans that some of these acts of violence are based on ethnic mobilisation.

This must be condemned by all South Africans at all costs as we are a nation committed to non-racialism and non-tribalism that is underpinned by the diversity and unity of all the people of South Africa, whatever their language, culture, religious beliefs and race.

Our commitment to our democratic Constitution is based on the fundamental principle that all people are equal before the law, and that all people have the right to equal protection before the law.

The rule of law safeguards against the abuse of power.

The rule of law protects the poor and the vulnerable.

Since the advent of democracy, institutions like the Constitutional Court have been at the forefront of improving the lives of South Africans.

Let us be clear, as a nation, that we will not tolerate acts of criminality.

Those who are involved in acts of violence will be arrested and prosecuted.

Those found guilty of breaking the lockdown regulations will receive the stipulated penalty.

This will be done without fear or favour.

We also condemn attempts to create confusion by sharing false images and videos, often from events that took place many years ago.

I ask that you think carefully before sharing anything on social media or elsewhere that may not be accurate or verified.

The vast majority of this country's citizens have shown that they want to live in peace and harmony.

They want to work and earn a living. They want to see our country recover from this pandemic.

We are confronting the COVID-19 pandemic together.

We are working to rebuild our economy together so that more jobs can be created, so that more businesses can be supported, and so we can put food on the table, send our children to school and support our families.

We are building up, not shutting down.

We will remain focused on protecting health and saving lives.

We will work as never before to ensure everyone is vaccinated.

We will rebuild our economy and create jobs.

We must forever remember that as difficult as times may be, we shall overcome.

May God continue to bless South Africa and protect her people.

I thank you.