

**ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC,  
NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDO,  
ON UPDATES TO GHANA'S ENHANCED RESPONSE TO THE  
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ON SUNDAY, 19<sup>TH</sup> APRIL, 2020.**

Fellow Ghanaians, good evening,

Today, Sunday, 19<sup>th</sup> April, 2020, is exactly three (3) weeks since I came to you and announced the imposition of restrictions to movement in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area and Kasoa, and the Greater Kumasi Metropolitan Area and its contiguous districts. I explained, at the time, that the decision was taken to give Government the opportunity to try to contain the spread of the virus, scale-up effectively the tracing of persons who had come into contact with infected persons, test them for the virus, and, if necessary, quarantine and isolate them for treatment, should they prove to be positive for the virus.

This decision to restrict movement has occasioned a number of severe difficulties for all of us across the country, especially for the poor and vulnerable, and not only for those resident in the affected areas. Let me express my gratitude to all of you for bearing with Government, all health workers, and with members of our security services, throughout this period. I requested all of us to sacrifice for our collective good, and we have been doing just that.

I thank all our healthcare workers, the men and women of our security services, and members of the media, for the work they are doing in helping to combat the spread of the virus. Let me also thank the individuals and organisations who have made contributions to the COVID-19 National Trust Fund. It is truly appreciated.

Fellow Ghanaians, since the first two (2) cases of infections were recorded on our shores, we have, till date, traced some eighty-six thousand (86,000) contacts, out of which we have test results of sixty-eight thousand, five hundred and ninety-one (68,591) contacts. There is, thus, a backlog of some eighteen thousand (18,000) tests whose results are yet to be received. The overwhelming majority of these contacts have been established in the last three weeks of the partial lockdown in Accra and Kumasi. Out of this number,

one thousand and forty-two (1,042) persons, i.e. 1.5%, have been confirmed as positive, with sixty seven thousand, five hundred and forty-nine (67,549), i.e. 98.5%, testing negative; ninety-nine (99) persons have recovered and have been discharged; and nine hundred and thirty (930) persons, who have been isolated, are responding to treatment either in their homes or in treatment facilities. These nine hundred and thirty (930) persons, after their treatment, will soon undergo the mandatory two (2) tests to determine if they have also recovered from the virus or otherwise.

The main reason our country has seen an increase in the number of confirmed cases over the last three (3) weeks is because of the decision we took aggressively to trace and test contacts of infected persons. This has enabled us to identify and isolate infected persons, protect the population from further infections, and contain better the spread of the virus. Indeed, Ghana is the only other country in Africa to have conducted more than sixty thousand tests, and we are ranked number one (1) in Africa in administering of tests per million people.

The decision to impose restrictions on movement was backed by the data at hand, and our next course of action, again, is backed by data and by science. Indeed, all that Government is doing is intended to achieve five (5) key objectives – limit and stop the importation of the virus; contain its spread; provide adequate care for the sick; limit the impact of the virus on social and economic life; and inspire the expansion of our domestic capability and deepen our self-reliance.

It is important to state, at the very onset, that scientists at the University of Ghana have successfully sequenced genomes of the virus responsible for the COVID-19 pandemic, obtaining important information about the genetic composition of viral strains in fifteen (15) of the confirmed cases in Ghana. This is a significant milestone in Ghana's response to the pandemic, as it will strengthen surveillance for tracking mutations of the virus, and aid in the tracing of the sources of community infections in people with no known contact with confirmed cases. The Ghanaian scientific community is to be warmly applauded for this advance and contribution to global knowledge. Their work makes us proud to be Ghanaian, and, who knows, God may work through them to discover a vaccine. What a triumph that would be! Indeed, the recent genomic characterisation of African Coronaviruses by our own

scientists illustrates the need to establish the enabling framework for sustainable vaccine manufacturing in Africa. We must advance African-led partnerships to drive scientific innovations for the control of viral diseases by vaccination. Ghana, recognising this critical public health tool, will support the African Vaccine Manufacturing Initiative, which is chaired by Noguchi's Prof William Ampofo, to promote the agenda for vaccine development and manufacturing in Africa by Africans for the world.

Government has also introduced the use of drones to expedite the transportation of samples to laboratory centres. On Friday, 17<sup>th</sup> April, for example, fifty-one (51) samples were delivered from the Omenako Drone Distribution Centre to Noguchi. Furthermore, we are introducing rapid results testing to augment our surveillance and enhanced contact tracing efforts, so that we can quickly isolate and treat confirmed cases.

From the sixty-eight thousand, five hundred and ninety-one (68,591) samples tested, we have been able to understand better the dynamism of the virus, map out its geographic footprint, and establish current and potential hotspots. We have also been able to isolate and educate asymptomatic carriers, and, thereby, help minimise the spread of the virus.

So far, it has been established that the virus was imported into our midst from foreign shores, and is being spread through person to person contact. The majority of persons infected in Ghana have mild to no symptoms at all, whilst a very small number have required hospital treatment, out of which nine (9) persons, with underlying ailments, have died.

Towards treatment, we have expanded and added to our network of COVID-19 treatment centers, with the Ga East and Bank of Ghana Hospitals being one hundred percent (100%) dedicated to the fight. In addition, we have set aside separate COVID-19 treatment centres at the University of Ghana Medical School Hospital, the Korle-Bu Teaching Hospital, Komfo Anokye Teaching Hospital, Kumasi South Hospital, and in other designated Regional and District Hospitals.

Last Friday, I was honoured to do the virtual sod-cutting ceremony for the construction of a 100-bed Infectious Disease and Isolation Facility at the Ga East Municipal Hospital, which is being funded through a public-private

partnership, under the leadership of the Ghana COVID-19 Private Sector Fund., and whose construction, with the assistance of the 48-Engineer Regiment of the Ghana Armed Forces, will be completed in six (6) weeks. Members of the Private Sector Fund have, indeed, acted like citizens, and not spectators, in these testing times for our country, and their patriotism is to be loudly praised.

We have also scaled up the domestic production of personal protective equipment, and our health care facilities, so far, have taken delivery of fourteen thousand, five hundred and fifty (14,550) scrubs, eleven thousand, nine hundred (11,900) gowns, nineteen thousand, nine hundred and eighty (19,980) head covers, two hundred and sixty three thousand, two hundred and eighty one (263,281) nose masks, thirteen thousand, and two (13,002) N-95 nose masks. Forty-one thousand, one hundred and seventeen (41,117) varying sizes of sanitizers have also been produced locally and delivered to our health facilities.

The enhancement of our capacity to test has been made possible by the dedication of the expanded teams at Noguchi Memorial Institute for Medical Research, the Kumasi Centre for Collaborative Research, and the National Public Health Reference Laboratory. Further, we are making significant investments in the laboratories at the Veterinary Laboratory, Accra, the Centre for Scientific and Industrial Research Laboratory, Accra, the Police Hospital, the 37 Military Hospitals, the University of Health and Allied Sciences in Ho, the Veterinary Services Department in Sekondi-Takoradi, the Public Health Laboratory in Tamale, the War Memorial Hospital in Navrongo and the Cape Coast Teaching Hospital, so they can also use PCR Technology. We are recalibrating one hundred (100) Regional and District Tuberculosis Gene Expert Laboratories across the country, to help ensure that we have a minimum situation of one testing centre per region.

Fellow Ghanaians, in view of our ability to undertake aggressive contact tracing of infected persons, the enhancement of our capacity to test, the expansion in the numbers of our treatment and isolation centres, our better understanding of the dynamism of the virus, the ramping up of our domestic capacity to produce our own personal protective equipment, sanitisers and medicines, the modest successes chalked at containing the spread of the virus in Accra and Kumasi, and the severe impact on the poor and vulnerable,

I have taken the decision to lift the three (3) week old restriction on movements in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area and Kasoa, and the Greater Kumasi Metropolitan Area and its contiguous districts, with effect from 1am on Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April. In effect, tomorrow will see the partial lockdown in Accra and Kumasi being lifted.

I must make it clear, at the outset, that lifting these restrictions does not mean we are letting our guard down. All other measures are still firmly in place. For the avoidance of doubt, the earlier measures announced on Wednesday, 15<sup>th</sup> March, which have been extended, are still very much in force, and have not been relaxed. I am demanding even greater adherence to these measures.

In here, I am referring to the suspension of all public gatherings, including conferences, workshops, funerals, parties, nightclubs, drinking spots, beaches, festivals, political rallies, religious activities and sporting events. All educational facilities, private and public, are to remain closed. Businesses and other workplaces can continue to operate, observing staff management and workplace protocols with the view to achieving social distancing and hygiene protocols.

Operators of public transport, including our buses, trotros and taxis, are to continue to run with a minimum number of passengers, as they have been doing for the last three weeks in maintaining social distancing. They must also continue to ensure the maintenance of enhanced hygienic conditions in all vehicles and terminals, by providing, amongst others, hand sanitizers, running water and soap for washing of hands. Domestic airlines are required to adhere to the same protocols.

The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, together with Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, will continue to implement measures to enhance conditions of hygiene in markets across the country, and expand the policy of alternate-days-for-alternative-products to improve social distancing in all markets.

As has been established, the overwhelming majority of confirmed cases have come from travellers or from people who have come into contact with travellers. It is, therefore, incumbent on us to continue to be vigilant about

travelers into our country until further notice, and to congratulate the men and women of the Immigration Service and the Marine Police Unit for their work in securing our borders. The arrest of ten (10) West African nationals in Tamale who all tested positive for the virus; the arrest of the six (6) Nigerian travellers who entered Ghana through unapproved routes along the Ghana-Togo border near Aflao, who also tested positive for the virus; and the recent arrest of ten (10) fishermen in the Western Region, who returned from Cote d'ivoire and have been quarantined, testify to the determination of our security services to protect our borders. I have, thus, signed an Executive Instrument, to extend the closure of our borders for two (2) more weeks, beginning Monday, 20<sup>th</sup> April.

Like the World Health Organisation (WHO) has recently advised, I want to encourage you to wear a mask wherever you go, as it will help you not to contract the virus, and keep it clean. If you own a business, or are providing a service, i.e. a barber, a hairdresser, a tailor, a taxi driver, a trotro driver and his 'mate', a shop keeper, a food seller, please do well to use a mask. The Ministry of Health will very soon issue guidelines on face masks for public use.

I entreat religious, traditional, community and opinion leaders to partner with government in engaging, mobilising and enforcing adherence to social distancing and personal hygiene practices in their respective communities. As difficult as it may be, I encourage all bereaved persons to conduct private burials of their loved ones, but ensure that the twenty-five (25) person limit is not breached. Indeed, some are burying their loved ones now, in order to have the final funeral rites later. The morgues in the country are becoming full, and will, in themselves, soon pose a public health hazard. So, let us act quickly on this.

As the days go by, and as we continue to sustain a grip on the rapid spread of the virus, the systematic easing of these restrictions will be undertaken to bring life back to normalcy. Definitely, we will continue to record new cases of infections, particularly with our policy of aggressive tracing and testing. However, I want to assure you that Government has put in place the appropriate measures to isolate and treat them. Should there be an unexpected outburst in infections within a community, I have put the health workers and the security services, including the Police Service and the Armed

Forces, on standby, to co-ordinate a rapid response of human and logistical resources, if necessary, to cordon, impose a curfew, trace, test, and treat infected persons in the affected community. Indeed, the focus of Government's policy and action will be based on the implementation of the 3Ts, i.e. tracing, testing and treating. In any event, stay at home, unless it is absolutely essential.

The movement of foodstuffs will continue from producing areas to the markets, and, with the intervention of the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies, the markets would be better organised for the sale of foodstuffs.

Fellow Ghanaians, as we fight to halt the spread of the virus, we are also engaged in fights on two other fronts – fights we must equally win.

Firstly, there continues to be the deliberate dissemination of fake news, disinformation and outright lies by some unpatriotic citizens about the spread of the virus since its outbreak in the country. These acts are being orchestrated by those who hope to benefit by seeking to sow the seeds of panic and confusion amongst the populace at this time of national crisis. I have an unequivocal message for those involved in these despicable acts – put an immediate stop to it, or be held accountable for your actions.

Secondly, as has been aptly stated by the Ghana Medical Association, being infected by the Coronavirus is not necessarily a death sentence. I have noticed, with great concern, the stories of some persons, who have recovered from the virus, now being confronted with another problem, i.e. stigmatization. This is not right, as it will rather drive people away from getting screened, tested and treated. The stigmatization of recovered persons must stop, because if the virus did not end their lives and livelihoods, the stigma from members of their communities should not.

I know the effects of the measures to contain the virus have been difficult for many, and that is why I mandated the creation of the GH¢1.2 billion Coronavirus Alleviation Programme to support households and businesses. Out of this amount, two hundred and eighty million cedis (GH¢280 million) is being used to provide food for the vulnerable and free water for all Ghanaians for three (3) months, i.e. April, May and June, three hundred and

twenty three million cedis (GH¢323 million) is being used to motivate our health workers, and six hundred million cedis (GH¢600 million) of assistance is being provided to micro, small and medium-scale businesses. I expect disbursements of the six hundred million cedis to start in May. Further, Government is fully absorbing electricity bills for one million active lifeline customers, and is granting a fifty percent (50%) subsidy on electricity bills of all other customers, using their March 2020 bill as their benchmark, for the months of April, May and June. In total, the relief on electricity will amount to some one billion cedis (GH¢1.02 billion).

Again, Government, through the Ministry of Gender, Children and Social Protection, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and the Ministry of Food and Agriculture through the National Buffer Stock Company, in collaboration with the MMDCEs and the District Disaster Management Committees, has provided over 2.5 million cooked food packs to vulnerable persons in the affected districts of Accra and Kumasi. Dry food packs have also been distributed, in collaboration with the faith-based organisations, to four hundred and seventy thousand (470,000) families in the same areas, as against the original target of four hundred thousand (400,000). I express my profound gratitude to the private sector and faith-based organisations, and traditional authorities for their support in this endeavour. I also commend highly the many individuals and private organisations who, on their own, organised hot meals and fed a number of vulnerable people within the restricted areas. To these individuals, ayekoo for being good neighbours to your fellow Ghanaians.

As we continue to battle this pandemic, it is imperative we plan to restore Ghana onto a sound economic footing, and create a path towards growth and transformation. The recent one billion United States dollar Rapid Credit Facility, secured from the IMF, without any precondition, and approved by Parliament, will be used to help close the financing gap that has been created by the pandemic through shortfalls in revenues and additional expenditures. I welcome the three billion cedi (GH¢3 billion) credit and stimulus package from the commercial banks, with the support of the Bank of Ghana, to revitalise industries, especially in the pharmaceutical, hospitality, services, and manufacturing sectors. The Minister for Finance, that hardworking, outstanding national treasurer, together with his counterpart in South Africa, as co-Chairs of the Committee of African Finance Ministers, have been



leading a Pan-African effort to bring debt relief to the continent in these difficult times. Last Friday, they achieved a nine-month debt standstill from the World Bank for all qualifying members of the International Development Association (IDA), starting from 1<sup>st</sup> May, 2020, totalling some forty-four billion United States dollars (\$44 billion) for the countries of Africa. In the case of Ghana, this amounts to a freeze in principal and interest payments for the year, amounting to some five hundred million United States dollars (\$500 million). This will create greater fiscal space to help make the Ghanaian economy much more resilient. I have charged the Finance Minister to leave no stone unturned to achieve an even greater and comprehensive debt relief programme for Africa.

Our success in defeating the virus is largely within our control. That means each and every one of us must exercise, at all times, during this period without the partial lockdown in Accra and Kumasi, a strong sense of selflessness, self-control and self-discipline.

It is important to stress strongly that coming out of the partial lockdown in Accra and Kumasi does not mean we are out of the pandemic. We will continue to monitor closely events in some hotspots in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area like Weija Gbawe, Ga East, and Ayawaso East Municipalities, and Tema Metropolis, and in the Eastern Region, like Asuoyaman and Lower Manya Krobo Districts. Whenever the situation so warrants, a community in which the virus is identified as becoming prevalent will be locked-down, until there is a clear understanding of the trajectory of the virus that will allow us to contain it.

We must obey the measures still in place, including the new ones, because we know our survival depends on them, and, the harder we are on ourselves in obeying them, the quicker and more enduring will be the victory.

To Ghanaians in all parts of the world, I urge you to remain steadfast in abiding by the rules and regulations that have been put in place by your host countries to combat the virus, and I extend the condolences of all your compatriots at home to all families abroad who have lost their loved ones to the virus. And, I take this opportunity to wish our High Commissioner to the United Kingdom and Ireland, my good friend, Papa Owusu Ankomah, who

has been affected by the virus, and other Ghanaians abroad who have been so-affected, a speedy recovery.

This disease is new, it is in plain evolution, and there is, therefore, as yet, no vaccine or cure. But we know enough to take action, and we shall be nimble and adapt as the situation changes. We will tailor our solutions to our unique social, economic and cultural conditions. There is no one-size-fits-all approach, but I pledge to you that Government will do whatever is required, in our particular circumstances, to safeguard the lives of our people, and keep our economy going.

Discipline, self-discipline, is that strong bridge that all of us, from the safety of our homes, in our workplaces, and in our communities, must build. We need to build a strong bridge of self-discipline in order for us to cross over from this difficult period of restrictions and the spread of the Coronavirus to the other side, where total freedom to go about our normal lives awaits us. To defeat the virus, and get there, we have to accept that we have to wash our hands, maintain good hygiene, refrain from shaking hands, wear our masks, and practice social distancing in all of our engagements.

Fellow Ghanaians, we are confronting one of the greatest challenges of our generation. We have to win this battle. We have to defeat the virus. It is our behaviour and response that will determine that. I have every confidence that, collectively, we, Ghanaians, have it in us to rise to the occasion and become victorious. I am very grateful for the great support you have given my Government and I, as we steer our country out of this crisis. Continue in unity to provide that support. This, too, shall pass, for the Battle is the Lord's.

Me da moa se paa, mon kɔ so ntiε masεm, na yεn nyinaa ndi nkunim.

Min da nyε shi waa, nyε yaa nɔ ni yε boa nwiεmɔ tuε, koni wɔ fεε wɔ ye nkuni.

May God bless us all, and our homeland Ghana, and make her great and strong.

I thank you for your attention, and have a good night.