The World Health Organisation has declared the coronavirus outbreak as a global pandemic. President Cyril Ramaphosa on Sunday, 15 March 2020, after consultation with provinces, announced measures in response to the pandemic, and declared a national state of disaster in terms of the Disaster Management Act. This will enable us to have an integrated and coordinated disaster management mechanism that will focus on preventing and reducing the outbreak of this virus.

Gauteng is the most vulnerable province due to its highly dense population and has the highest transport network that connects to the rest of the continent. Our Capital City, Tshwane is the second largest diplomatic capital after Washington DC.

In addition, we have two ports of entry, namely O.R. Tambo International Airport and Lanseria Airport which serve many people who visit South Africa and travel to many destinations in the world. As our province is the economic hub of the country, many multi-national companies have their head offices in Johannesburg.

The Gauteng Provincial Government implemented measures to deal with COVID-19 prior to the declaration of the state of national disaster by the President. The measures include the following:

1. The establishment of a multi-sectoral coordination at both Provincial and District levels for COVID-19 preparedness and response;
2. Strengthening capacity to undertake surveillance for COVID-19 at Provincial and District levels, including the training of 259 contact tracers.
3. The Gauteng AIDS council, which met on Friday, 13 March 2020, drew lessons from the way we organised ourselves in response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. All sectors of the AIDS Council have committed to be in forefront of the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.
4. Ensuring that the health care system is prepared to receive, manage and report on the clinical progress of persons with COVID-19;
5. Strengthening the National Health Laboratory Services capacity to support testing for COVID-19;
6. The designation of three hospitals - Charlotte Maxeke Academic, Steve Biko Academic as well as Tembisa Tertiary – for appropriate treatment of confirmed cases.
Following the declaration of the national disaster, on Monday, 16 March 2020, we convened a special meeting of the Executive Council - with mayors from Johannesburg, Ekurhuleni, West Rand and Sedibeng municipalities in attendance - to discuss a comprehensive response by the province including how we will enforce all measures announced by the President.

We have adopted a widely multi-sectoral and multi-disciplinary approach and should proactively involve significant actors within the province to deal with the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Gauteng Command Council, chaired by the Premier, has been established to lead the implementation and enforcement of the extraordinary measures to curb the spread of COVID-19.

We have also tasked another team of MEC’s to assess the economic impact of the pandemic. The team will consist of MEC’s for Finance, Economic Development and Education.

Our comprehensive response plan of action integrates health, social, economic, environmental, institutional and political aspects.

The following constitutes elements of the implementation plan for Gauteng in enforcing the measures as outlined by the President:

1. Enhancing capacity of emergency medical services to respond to reported cases;
2. Establishing and maintaining screening capacity at key points of entry;
3. Continuously informing the public on the public health risks of coronavirus;
4. Establishing a war room that will do routine monitoring, evaluation and surveillance using multiple approaches, systems and technologies;
5. Refurbishment of Carletonville Hospital;
6. All hospitals in the province have been directed to create isolation areas for suspected and probable COVID-19 cases, in line with the district management approach.
7. 9000 community healthcare workers will be trained as contact tracers, who are currently doing tracing of patients with TB and HIV/AIDS.
8. The Department of Health is procuring 10 000 test kits over and above what the NICD is already providing to better prepare, should the pandemic persist.

While these measures are outlined above, the focus is on treatment and containment of the spread of the virus. There are many things that all of us can and must do as part of our comprehensive response to the pandemic. Firstly, we must emphasise the following preventative measures:
- Wash your hands regularly with soap or an alcohol-based hand sanitiser.
- Avoid touching your eyes, nose, and mouth with unwashed hands.
- Avoid close contact with people who are sick.
- Cover your cough or sneeze with a flexed elbow or a tissue, then throw the tissue in the bin immediately.
- Clean and disinfect frequently touched objects and surfaces.

We have taken measures to ensure that government service continue uninterrupted, as we contain the spread of the pandemic. Where possible, some of the staff will work remotely as we minimise physical contact in compliance with the measures outlined by the President. Hand sanitisers have been placed at all entrance points and points of exit in all public buildings and facilities. The Biometric system is being deactivated and some departments are reverting to cards for access control. Government will provide gloves and masks for all frontline staff especially those who provide essential services.

The Gauteng Provincial Government will make use of appropriate digital technology, including video conferencing, through Skype and similar technologies, for meetings with business and citizens.

We also urge residents to utilise online platforms to transact with government, including for the payment of services. A task team on Labour led by MEC Mamabolo, Director General, Ms Phindile Baleni and labour representative has met and engaged Labour on the DPSA Circular with regards to public service.

The task team will meet weekly to monitor the implementation of the DPSA Circular 7 of 2020, State of Disaster: Guidelines for the Containment/Management of the Corona Virus (COVID-19) in the public service.

We are pleased that Labour is on board, and together we will continue to provide services to the people of Gauteng. In addition, the provincial government will implement emergency procurement, in line with Treasury regulations. This will ensure that all required goods and services are available during the disaster period.

We will embark on a concerted public education campaign using multimedia products and platforms to educate people about COVID-19, inform the public about Gauteng testing sites, prevention control and treatment facilities.

A reading programme will be implemented for parents and learners to encourage parents to read to their children for at least one hour daily. Learners are expected to read passages in the Department of Basic Education (DBE) workbooks and respond to comprehension questions. Schools that are registered will provide access to a Digital Library, and also provide readers and DBE workbooks (reading passages) for learners to read at home.

With regards to public transport, we are working with the Taxi Industry to establish the public transport health and hygiene teams, at regional and local level, at every nodal facility, taxi ranks and Gautrain stations. These teams are managing the day to day health and hygiene on the ground, including:

- Ensuring that there are hand-sanitisers/soap, handwashing basins and all resources necessary as identified by the Department of Health in all nodal public facilities.
- Ensuring that minibus Taxis are supplied with hand sanitisers adequate for each trip.
- Each transport mode must have hand sanitizers in the vehicle(s).
- Equally, buses and trains will be sanitised after every trip.
- We will ensure that commuters use hand sanitisers, and wash their hands when boarding and when disembarking.
Ensuring that public transport facilities will be disinfected twice a day.

With regards to the Gautrain, we will continue with the following interventions:
- Gautrain system has been cleaned with alcohol-based disinfectants. These include trains, busses and stations, especially at all touch points such as handrails, door handles and station bathrooms.
- Cleaning and disinfecting is carried out during the day as well as overnight when the trains are back in the depot.
- Air ducts on trains are being treated with a disinfecting spray during maintenance hours.
- Whilst all non-essential domestic travel, particularly by air, rail, taxis and bus, has been discouraged, we will carry the message out that Gautrain users, where possible, work from home and do not engage in non-essential travel. Although this will impact on revenue, it is necessary to reduce the risk of the spread of the virus.
- Train and bus timetables will be reduced over the next week to allow for cleaning at the end of each trip, at the OR Tambo Station, Park Station and Hatfield Station.
- We have instructed the Gautrain Management Agency team to work with ACSA to coordinate airport measures of messaging, sanitation and ultimately discouraging air travel until the situation changes.

The provincial government and municipalities will do everything in their powers to enforce the measures announced by the president. We are going to increase police visibility and community patrolling to ensure compliance with the 100 people per gathering. The police will invoke Regulation of Gatherings Act 205 of 1993 to ensure that all residents abide to the directive by the President. Communities are encouraged to inform or notify the police about funerals, weddings and any other events taking place during this period.

All public meetings and non-essential meetings and gatherings have been cancelled, this includes Human Rights Commemoration in Sharpeville, the sporting, arts and culture events.

We thank the Faith-Based community and the sporting fraternity and other institutions for taking appropriate steps to comply with the measures announced by the President.

We agreed with Municipalities that from today, the 18th of March 2020, all public facilities will be closed. These include:
- Recreational facilities
- Community halls/Civic centres
- Swimming pools
- Camping sites
- Museums
- Art centres
- Stadia
- Picnic and spray parks
- Braai and picnic spots
- City sports fields
- Nature reserves and Resorts
We are aware that several communities are taking initiatives to establish COVID-19 Action Groups. This is a good example of how communities can best organise themselves to tackle the pandemic. We encourage all communities across the length and breadth of Gauteng to establish COVID-19 Action Groups.

We have also been meeting and engaging with civil society; Labour, business and churches to ensure that together we minimize and reduce the spread of COVID-19.

On Thursday, 19 March 2020, the Premier will meet with leaders of political parties represented in the provincial legislature. This will be followed by another meeting with business leaders on Friday, 20 March 2020. The Provincial Command team will meet twice a week and receive reports from the different sectoral teams.

Whilst these measures are in place, we urge communities to support one another, this is the time to go back to the values of uBuntu. Care for your neighbour and help where you can. We will give regular updates and feedback on the implementation of the plan.

Issued by Gauteng Provincial Government

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