



GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI

PRESS RELEASE ON THE SITUATION OF THE CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC IN THE COUNTRY AND REVIEW OF RULES AND GUIDELINES IN THE CONTEXT OF EVOLVING REGIONAL AND GLOBAL SITUATIONS.

November 29, 2021

The Presidential Task Force on Coronavirus through the Public Health Emergency Operations Centre on COVID-19 (EOC) has been closely monitoring the trend of the pandemic in our country, in the region and in the world.

Our current statistics indicate that we have remained at level 1 of the pandemic, as defined in the Public Health (Corona Virus and COVID-19) (Prevention, Containment and Management) (Amendment) (No3) Rules, 2021, since the first week of October 2021. We believe these positive strides in our country are a result of our collective efforts to implement proven pharmaceutical and non-pharmaceutical interventions since the first cases were reported in April 2020. I would therefore like to sincerely thank all citizens and inhabitants that continue to comply with the recommended interventions and measures, in particular, use of face masks in public places, frequent washing of hands with soap and water, or use of alcohol based sanitizers, keeping social distance, avoiding crowded places, and most importantly, getting vaccinated against COVID-19 for those that are eligible. I am pleased to report too that there has been corresponding low levels of cases and deaths in our neighboring countries, and region, until lately, reducing the threat of imported cases. I can only ask fellow Malawians and all inhabitants to be even more vigilant in observing the recommended rules and regulations as announced at the last press statement of the Taskforce. I can confirm that these rules and guidelines remain in force.

Fellow Malawians, the favourable internal outlook notwithstanding, we have become aware of reports of increasing COVID-19 cases and deaths in some regions of the world, notably in the United Kingdom, Europe, North America and in the last week, in parts of the Republic of South Africa. In addition, as reported by the Secretary for Health on Friday 26 November, there is a new SARS-COV-2 (the virus that causes COVID-19) variant of concern in the world, christened Omicron by the World Health Organisation, that has been identified in some Southern African countries including South Africa and Botswana. The variant has many mutations and is therefore expected to show increased ability to cause severe disease, re-infection and possible vaccine resistance compared to other variants of concern.

In line with its mandate, and in light of these developments, The Presidential Taskforce on Coronavirus met on Friday 26th November 2021 to review the status of the pandemic and the adequacy of the measures that are currently in place. The Taskforce has resolved to tighten some of the preventive measures in line with the level of the epidemic at which we are. Therefore, by the powers invested in me through the Public Health (Corona Virus and COVID-19) (Prevention,

Containment and Management) (Amendment) (No3) Rules, 2021; I hereby announce the following new or additional measures within the level 1 status that we are at.

B.1 Requirement for entry into Malawi.

In addition to a negative PCR based COVID-19 Certificate that is no older than 72 hours at time of arrival:

- i. All arriving travellers of all nationalities, including Malawians, **will be expected to show a valid electronic COVID-19 full vaccination Certificate at point of entry**
- ii. **Arriving travellers that are not able to show an electronic certificate at point of entry, shall be expected to access COVID-19 Vaccine that will be available for free at the point of entry before being processed to enter / re-enter the country, as a preventive measure. While the current COVID-19 vaccines are famous for their ability to protect against severe disease and death from COVID-19, they are also known to be fairly effective in preventing the propagation of infection and mutation across communities by reducing prevalent levels of the virus.**
- iii. **Travellers that are not able to produce a valid electronic COVID-19 certificate, and refuse to access COVID-19 vaccine offered at point of entry, will be required to undergo institutional quarantine for symptoms monitoring for 10 days at their cost.**
- iv. **With immediate effect, Dzaleka Refugee Camp in Dowa District should be managed technically as a Point of Entry for purposes of COVID-19 control. In this respect, all new arrivals to Dzaleka Refugee Camp should be laboratory tested for COVID-19 on arrival irrespective of the status of their symptoms, and all will continue to be kept in the existing quarantine bay for 14 days before being released to the main camp area, as is currently the practice. Those that test positive will continue to be managed as per national protocols and district health system institutional isolation arrangements.**

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| <ol style="list-style-type: none">a. Those without a valid negative PCR based COVID-19 test Certificate will be subjected to a Rapid Antigen Test on site at the Point of Entry before proceeding through immigration services, <u>without exception, and at their cost.</u>b. Those that turn out positive on the Rapid Antigen Test will have a PCR test processed, <u>also at their cost</u> and they will be conveyed to the District Health System where they are proceeding, where they will be managed according to standard national protocols. |
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B. 2 Adjusted COVID-19 Vaccination age limits

Current vaccination age eligibility policy in the country is for those aged 18 years and above.

Informed by growing international evidence and practice, and advice from local Immunization Experts Group, age eligibility for use of Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine is hereby extended to

cover all those aged 12 years and above. **But let me stress, this extension is only for Pfizer-BioNTech Covid-19 Vaccine for the time being, until further expert advice is available and announced regarding other vaccines.**

B. 3 Timeframe for the new measures

1. The new testing and COVID-19 vaccination measures at Dzaleka Refugee Camp come into effect **from Monday 29th November 2021**
2. The new COVID-19 testing measures **at all Points of Entry will take effect from Monday 6 December 2021.**
3. The new COVID-19 Vaccine Electronic Certificate requirement will come into effect **from Friday 10th December 2021**

All these new measures **will remain in force until 31 December 2021, or as may be further advised, as the situations may dictate.**

I wish to call upon all relevant government ministries and department responsible for the areas concerned in implementing the new and additional matures, to facilitate with minimum delay the operationalization of the new measures accordingly. Meanwhile, the taskforce will continue to monitor the situation of the pandemic in the country, and the evolving broader global and regional trends, and make necessary further recommendations to contain the pandemic in the country as the situations will demand.

No one is safe until everyone else is safe. Get Fully Vaccinated! Wear Face Mask! Wash your hands frequently, avoid crowded places, and observe social distancing. Protect yourself. Protect your loved ones. Protect everyone.



**Hon. Khumbize Kandodo Chiponda, MP
MINISTER OF HEALTH
CO-CHAIRPERSON – PRESIDENTIAL TASKFORCE**