

H. E. Yoweri Kaguta Museveni,
President of the Republic of Uganda,
Corona Virus COVID-19 Directives,
Monday, March 30th, 2020.

Countrymen and countrywomen

I am here, to again address you on the issue of the corona-virus. I first, addressed you on this issue on the 18th of March, 2020. Before I addressed you, together with the experts, we had discussed, in depth, the science of this virus. In that study, we had discovered the following characteristics of this virus.

1. It spreads through inhalation if somebody with the virus coughs (okukororra) or sneezes (okwetsyamura) near you – within four metres from you. It will, then, infect you through the inhalation of the rwooya (vapour) of the sick person that would have coughed or sneezed.

2. The second mode of spreading is when the infected person pollutes surfaces such as tables, door handles, etc. If you touch the polluted surface and, then, touch yourself in the soft parts of the body: eyes, nose or mouth, you also get infected. The virus cannot go through the normal, intact skin of a human being. It only goes through the soft parts mentioned above.

3. Although the healthy people afflicted may survive, it can kill alot of people that already have other medical conditions such as Aids, blood-pressure, pregnancy, diabetes, sickle-cells, cancer, the elderly, etc. In China, its kill rate was 4.05%. In Italy its now 11.03% and Spain, its kill rate is now 8.4%. It even kills the young people in some circumstances, like the young doctor, Li Wenliang, of Wuhan in China, who first identified this problem. He was only 33 years old.

Given its spread methods – sneezing and coughing by an inconsiderate and careless person in a cluster of people bunched together as well as an individual's own carelessness of touching the soft parts of your body (the eyes, the nose and the mouth) without washing your hands or sanitizing them first, after careful study, we decided that this virus will spread fastest if it gets into large concentrations of people, some of whom may be behaving inconsiderately or carelessly as stated above. We, therefore, adopted the strategy of dispersing any concentration that may provide fuel to this virus.

In my address of the 18th of March, 2020, I put out 13 actions that dealt with this problem, in part, as well as other associated matters. The 13 measures were:

- (1) Close all the Educational Institutions which accounted for 15 million young Ugandans;
- (2) Suspend communal prayers in Mosques, Churches or in Stadia and other open air venues;
- (3) Stop all public political rallies, cultural gatherings or conferences;
- (4) Banned Ugandans from moving to or through category one (I) countries that had had a large number of corona cases by that time;
- (5) We allowed returning Ugandans provided they underwent mandatory quarantine, at their cost, for 14 days at a venue identified by the Ministry of Health;
- (6) We allowed the non-agricultural gathering points to continue but with SOPs(Standard Operating Procedures) put out by the Ministry of Health; and these gathering points were: factories, hotels, large plantations, markets, taxi-parks, etc.;
- (7) We discouraged the hexagonal, extravagant Ugandan-style weddings; if in a hurry, we encouraged the couples to go for the scientific weddings by the actual stakeholders, accompanied by a few people;
- (8) Burials could not be postponed, but it should be for a few people – the concerned homestead;
- (9) With the 33 million farmers, according to the 2014 census, there was no problem because they are dispersed in their farms, plantations, etc.; the only issues to deal with here were the monthly or weekly cattle auction markets (ebikomera); and obutare (food markets); these were suspended;
- (10) At that time, we thought that we could continue with the public transport systems of buses, mini-buses, taxis, boda-bodas, etc., provided they were given SOPs;
- (11) The discos, dances, bars, sports, music shows, cinemas and concerts were all suspended;
- (12) Number 12 was hygiene and enlightened (not kikafiri behavior) behaviours of not coughing or sneezing in public, no spitting, washing with soap and water or using sanitizers, regularly disinfecting surfaces such as tables, door handles,

etc. and not touching your eyes, nose or mouth with contaminated and unwashed hands; and

(13) Ended with nutrition to strengthen the body defence system.

We quickly, however, learnt that some of the actors were not obeying these measures and that, for instance, the returnees from abroad, from the high risk countries, were escaping from the quarantine even when it was mandatory. The ones in self-quarantine were also escaping, e.g. the Chinese that were arrested on the Congo boarder, in Zombo or the returnee from Kisumu that is the father of the Iganga baby that turned up positive that went into hiding. These gaps could cause us serious problems.

These gaps were undermining the strategy of denying the virus the fuel that it could ignite and sustain its expansion by ensuring that there is no match-box and there is no dry grass – no virus and no concentrated masses. Therefore, on the 25th of March, 2020, on the 41st Anniversary of the battle of Rugaando, I announced two new measures:

1. Stopped all passengers coming into Uganda by air, land or water; this affected in-coming planes, buses, taxis or boats;
2. Also prohibited from entry were the pedestrians – people walking on foot from the neighbouring countries.

In all these measures, we were careful to clearly state that cargo planes and cargo vehicles, within Uganda and between Uganda and the outside, should continue with only the crews for the air-crafts and 3 persons per cargo vehicle.

Then, on the 21st of March, 2020, we announced additional measures as follows:

(i) All public passenger transport vehicles are stopped and those were: taxis, coasters, buses, passenger trains, tuk-tuks (tri-cycles) and bodabodas;

(ii) Secondly, in order to scale down the numbers of the populations in the markets, we announced that only food sellers should remain in the markets; the non-food sellers should suspend their activities.

However, private vehicles could continue but with only 3 people maximum per vehicle. However, ambulances, army vehicles, garbage collection vehicles, etc., would continue.

Since that time, we have been monitoring the situation. It was good we took all these measures. However, there are still windows through which the virus can continue to spread. As of today, the 30th of March, 2020, 31 Ugandans and 2 Chinese have been confirmed as being positive with the virus.

Almost all of them are imported cases by Ugandans returning from mainly Dubai (UAE), Europe, the USA and Afghanistan. Only 3 are the ones that received it from the importers. These are: the wife and daughter of the Masaka man and the baby from Iganga whose father had returned from Kisumu in Kenya. Out of the 33, the number of eight (8) were intercepted at Entebbe, in the quarantine or, even, at the airport, like the case number one, who was detected by the temperature monitor and another 7 that were first identified by the temperature monitoring system. This means that 14 out of the 33 had already entered the ekibuga (city, town), the lujja (compound) and some had even entered omuunju – munyuumba (inside the house) since we did not detect them at the Eireembo (the main entrance) or they escaped from the Eishaazi – the holding ground – by escaping from the quarantine. How many other Ugandans did they interact closely with to infect them? That is what we need to discover and soonest. It is good that those who start feeling the symptoms report themselves, like the case from Hoima did. However, this disease has two characteristics that make the work of fighting it tedious and quite challenging and need maximum vigilance.

One characteristic is that some of the infected people may not feel sick and may not even know that they are infected. Yet, they will continue spreading the disease, of course, through the carelessness of the general population of, for instance, polluting surfaces and touching oneself in the soft parts of one's body: the eyes, the nose and the mouth; and sitting very close to one another even if the infected person is not coughing. After further careful analysis, we have come to the conclusion that to be on the safe side, it is better we err on the side of caution than to wait for a possible situation like of some countries where a 1,000 people are dying per day from this disease.

The second characteristic of this virus is that those that are infected, even when they survive, they take long in the hospital. In China, one case took 2 months. This has caused the filling up of all the hospital places even in the countries with advanced medical systems, until a situation where the medical authorities have to decide on who should be allowed to die and who should not.

Therefore, with these cases that had entered in the house, we should not wait for that situation. Incidentally, we now have under quarantine, a total of 839 persons. Even those that are alleged to have escaped from the quarantine, have all come back. How many people had they interacted with and how careless are

they with the sitting close to one another and with the carelessly touching their soft parts? We, therefore, think that there is less risk in taking the risk of the bitter medicine of maximum restrictions for a limited time than gambling by assuming that pollution was limited when we are not absolutely sure. Since we started this campaign of sensitization, if everybody listened by not coughing and sneezing near other people, by not sitting too close to one another when the infected person has got no symptoms and by not carelessly touching oneself in the soft parts, the cases that entered into the house would not have spread the disease. The question, however, is: “Did all our people listen?”

That is why it is better not to take any risk by being complacent and assuming that everybody took heed when many may have not taken heed. That is why we have decided to take additional measures as follows:

1. Measure number one is to prohibit all people to people movement by everybody including those using their private vehicles, bodabodas, tuk-tuks, etc. Why? Two reasons: (i) some private car owners have turned their cars into taxis, transporting the two people we had permitted, assuming that they would be members of one’s family, when in fact they were passengers being charged the exorbitant fare of shillings 50,000/- from Kampala to Jinja. Hence, the problem we were trying to cure of allowing the mixing of people from different sources was not being addressed. Instead, it was taking new forms. The people with private cars were now the new public transporters without licences and facilitating the dangerous mixing in the process. Secondly, even more importantly, even if the private car owners had been disciplined and only moved around with only the 2 members of their families, still that movement would be dangerous because we do not know who has the virus now and who does not, given the penetration of the imported cases into the society, short-lived though it may have been. The ban on privately owned passenger vehicles will take effect from 2200 hours (Ten O’clock – Shaaha inna ez’ekiro), today, the 30th of March, 2020. I would have given the public time to adjust but on more scientific study, it was found that this would be a wrong policy. Why? A longer time would give people time to try and go to the villages. In so doing, they may transfer the sickness. We, would, then, not be curing anything. This freezing of movement will last 14 days from the 1st of April, 2020. This time it is not Fool’s Day; it is wise-person’s Day.
2. The second category of concentrations are the shopping malls, arcades, hardware shops, which gather alot of people to sell and buy non-food items. These are suspended for 14 days starting with the 1st of April, 2020.
3. All the non-food shops (stores) should also close. Only food stores, stores selling agricultural products, veterinary products, detergents and

pharmaceuticals should remain open. The Ministry of Health should work out SOPs for those stores. Many people should not be allowed to congregate there and form lines to buy. Home deliveries should, instead, be encouraged.

4. The Super-markets should remain open but with clear SOPs that should restrict numbers that enter and leave the site at a given time and the handling of trolleys within the super-markets. A lot of people can be infected by handling the unsterilized trolleys within the super-markets.

5. The established Food Markets in Kampala and the other towns should continue to be open. However, two precautions must be observed. One, the distance of four metres to the front, to the left, to the right and to the rear – between seller and buyer and also seller and seller must be observed in all the markets. Secondly, the sellers must not go home during the 14 days. They must arrange to stay nearby for that duration. That movement between workplace to home and back, is part of the problem. How are the people you left at home and how do you move to work if there is no public transport? It is that mixing that we want to freeze – between home, enroute and workplace. Be in only one place for 14 days and we see what is happening.

6. Saloons, Lodges and garages should also be shut for 14 days from the 1st of April, 2020.

7. Like the farms, we would like the factories to keep producing because that is the life-blood of the country. However, the danger is in the workers going home and coming back. It is that daily movement that must be frozen. Let the factory owners arrange for the crucial employees to camp around the factory area for the 14 days. If they cannot do that, let them suspend production for 14 days.

8. Construction sites should continue if they can be able to encamp their workers for 14 days. Otherwise, they should suspend construction for the 14 days.

9. The essential services are: the medical, agriculture and veterinary, telecommunication, door-to-door delivery, financial institutions, all media, Private Security companies, cleaning services, garbage collection, fire-brigade, fuel stations, water departments and some KCCA staff should continue to operate.

URA should also not close business on account of not paying taxes in these 14 days. These employers should, however, see whether they can encamp some staff near the workplace for the 14 days, which is the preferred way, or else get

a special exemption from the RDC with the concurrence of the District Medical Officer.

10. Cargo transport by train, plane, lorry, pick-up, tuku-tukus, bodaboda and bicycle, within Uganda and between Uganda and the outside, must continue but only with minimum numbers, technically needed as follows: Cargo – Air-craft – only the crew; Lorry – not more than 3 persons i.e. driver, tonne-boy plus one, etc., as will be directed by the Ministry of Transport, working with the National Task Force on the Corona virus.

11. Gatherings of more than 5 persons are hereby prohibited.

12. Except for cargo planes, lorries, pick-ups and trains, starting with the 31st of March, 2020, at 1900 hours (Saa Moja ya Usiku), there will be a curfew throughout the whole of Uganda.

All other movements should stop. Let people stay in-doors in their homes except for the cargo-transporters. The exemption of cargo transporters does not apply to the bodabodas, tukutukus or bicycles in the curfew hours. Those should only operate during daylight hours.

13. In order to deal with some unavoidable health issues like mothers in child birth or very sick people, permission can be sought from the RDC to use private transport to take such a person to hospital. Additionally, government vehicles that do not belong to UPDF, Police, Prisons or UWA, will be pooled and deployed at the District Health Offices, including the divisions of Kampala, with their drivers, staying in tented compounds, ready to help in those health emergencies. Those vehicles will be under the command of the District Medical Officer.

14. On account of this pandemic, some sectors of the economy are suffering, such as the tourism industry, the entertainment industry, the transport industry, etc. However, as I said earlier, new opportunities are emerging in this misfortune. You have seen how the demand for sanitizers, face masks, bicycles, etc., has stimulated new industrial opportunities. Working with the IMF and the World Bank, we shall set up a fund in UDB to accelerate industrialization through import-substitution and export promotion. You have seen how dangerous it is for Africa to excessively depend on imports from outside. This is the time to wake-up.

15. We are going to discuss with Banks, electricity companies and water companies in connection with the loans and bills, many people have with these

units. It is not correct to disconnect water or electricity on account of non-payment during this time of shutdown or to seize properties on account of the non-payment of loans.

16. Government workers should also stay at home for the 14 days, except for the Army, the Police, the Health workers, the Electricity, Water and Telephone workers. Even there, however, SOPs should be worked out for the soldiers, etc., that do not stay in the barracks. This problem of not staying near the workplace is something I have never supported. At one time, I wanted to shift and stay in Lubiri when it was still a barracks. The Army leaders, that time, pacified me by turning both Nakasero and Entebbe into barracks, including taking over Nsamizi Hill. People who do not stay in barracks, should either stay away for the duration of the shut down or camp in the barracks. The families of the soldiers and policemen should also be controlled moving in and out of the barracks should be suspended and so should the visitors. Otherwise, we can have a major outbreak in the barracks. The vehicles of the Army, Police, ambulances utilities' vehicles, Prisons, UWA, etc., will continue to move on orders of the competent authorities.

The Government anti-Corona-virus actions of stopping public transport and other measures have put the drivers and other people out of work. Besides, many of them live hand to mouth – the daily bread. Without those activities, especially in the towns, such people may not be able to buy food. The Government, after properly identifying these people will distribute food to them in the form of akahuunga (maize flour), beans, powder milk, sugar, salt, etc. In the meantime, I direct the Police to arrest the opportunistic and irresponsible politicians who try to distribute food for cheap popularity. Those are very dangerous to the health of the people. When you try to distribute food or money in such a situation, people gather around you. Many people can be infected in that process. You will, therefore, have caused the sickness or death of those people. Anybody involved in that effort will be arrested and charged with attempted murder. Today, Mr. Elumelu sent me US\$150,000. I will use it to buy, may be, three (3) four-wheel drive vehicles to use, by the Ministry of Health to use in this effort. Those trying to take patients to hospitals, must also stop because they spread the virus in the process. If they have money, let them contribute it to the Task Force to use in a disciplined and safe way. In Mbale, the Chinese donated to me two four-wheel drive Jeeps. I have donated these to the Task Force of the anti-corona virus.

However, the crucial point is the stopping of the epidemic. I do not want us to lose millions of our vulnerable people to this wholly avoidable epidemic just on account of indiscipline. What is the indiscipline?

Coughing or sneezing where there are other people; not washing or sanitizing your hands regularly; touching yourself in the soft parts of the body with unwashed hands, the soft parts being the eyes, the nose and the mouth; and congregating in numbers when science is telling us to avoid this wholly avoidable danger, disperse and do not congregate.

The idea, a Sheikh sent to me the verse from Isaiah, Chapter 26: Verse 20. It says: "Go home my people and lock your doors! Hide yourselves for a little while until the lord's anger has passed".