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Media Statement 2 April 2020

As at today the total number of COVID-29 positive cases is 1462- this is an increase of 82 cases.

We are still observing that the increase of cases is below what we had initially projected and we believe this is due to the restriction we have placed on movement and border crossing.

However, I still want to caution that, until we have a clear sense of what is happening in our densely populated areas, in particular townships, we should not be lulled into complacency but continue to venture forth in full combat by proactively conducting wall to wall testing and finding all COVID-19 affected people in the country.

That way we can do what needs to be done to break the cycle of transmission and beat COVID-19 as a nation.

We had last reported five deaths. We wish to indicate that we are awaiting the reports of two more deaths- once these have been concluded and verified we will inform the public of the revised number of deaths.

We are slowly seeing an increase in numbers of recoveries, however recovery numbers do tend to lag behind because of the criteria for recovery. Our focus right now is finding all active cases and treating those who are very ill.

Matters Arising: 2 April 2020

Today was a very exciting day in Gauteng Province and the Free State.
Gauteng

In Gauteng, we started the day by receiving 1500 mobile devices from the CEO of Samsung Mr Sung Yoon. In addition Telkom sponsored the equivalent number of sim cards which will be loaded with 3 gigs of data per month, free of charge, for the duration of the COVID-19 combat. We were very honoured to receive these sim cards from the Telkom Group CEO Mr Siphon Maseko. I would like to take this opportunity to thank both these business leaders

for heeding the Thuma Mina call and joining hands with us to fight COVID-19 using advanced technology for tracking and tracing.

We will distribute these devices to our current places of most urgent need: Gauteng, Free State Western Cape and KwaZulu Natal. 1500 devices to assist our field workers with tracking and tracing COVID-19 contacts is a very good start however we are fielding 10 000 workers for community screening, We therefore call on all Telecommunications companies to follow the lead of Samsung and Telkom and assist us to equip all 10 000 workers with devices to assist track and trace COVID-19 affected citizens.

Whilst engaging the Head of Samsung for Africa, who is from South Korea, I took the opportunity of discussing how important it has been for us to study and learn from the successes of South Korea. Not so long ago, South Korea was the second most affected country in the world. Today, as the world exceeds one million cases, South Korea now sits at number 15. South Korea succeeded in containing what was threatening to be a runaway situation by a proactive approach to large scale sanitizing, testing and early lockdowns. We look forward to continuing to learn from and partner with South Korea.

Free State

I have to say that it has been a most exciting afternoon spent at the Free State.

We know that in the Free State, the epicenter of the outbreak was a church gathering in Mangaung, Bloemfontein. Again having learnt from situations like in Daegu, South Korea, we knew that it was vital to act quickly in the Free State and mobilize resources to the area for large scale testing, track and tracing and quarantine.

As you know the Free State was the first to receive mobile testing units to ensure every church member was tested. I am pleased to report that, further to this the tracking and tracing of all contacts has gone extremely well, extending to all provinces where affected congregants may have traveled to after the conference. It is remarkable that of 1700 contacts 1600 have been traced already.

I had an opportunity to visit the operations centre and the infectious diseases unit and could see that all the right things were being done.

A lot of innovative work has emerged here which not only bodes well for the fight against COVID-19 but also for the future of medicine in this country and the world.

It has been a real pleasure interacting with the clinicians and health care professionals at the academic hospital, Universitas. The work that has been done here will surely filter through the entire health system in the province and country and this is very exciting.

I was exposed to innovations such as printing of PEEP ventilation masks as well as face masks. With 3-D printing technology it will be possible to print 33 000 face masks. As the world faces mask shortage this was most gratifying to discover and I congratulate all those who have been involved with such innovations.

The teams here have confidently and proactively gone about preparing for all eventualities of COVID-19. The ICU capacity has been increased from 16 beds to 86 beds- this is no

mean feat. Maternal and neonatal wards have also been equipped to safely manage COVID-19 patients without the threat of cross contamination.

Strategies to reducing hospital burden and freeing up beds have included lengthening the course of repeat scripts from three to six months, early discharge and reducing the number of repeat hospital visits.

Training of all staff, including porters and cleaners has been intensified- the full work force is now well versed on COVID-19, the donning and doffing of personal protective equipment and the overall knowledge that one needs to safely manage COVID-19 affected clients. This really is a very important aspect and I congratulate the team here for the stellar work done.

I really want to thank Premiers, MEC's, clinicians, frontline and field workers for the incredible work being done in the fight against COVID-19

I would also like to thank all South Africans for heeding the call to stay at home- as I traverse the length and breath of the country I can see that our people have truly partnered with the Government- this was also an observation made by the aforementioned Mr Yoon of Samsung, who observed that we share with the people of South Korea- this bodes very well for our ability to beat COVID-19.

As the flu season approaches, I make a special call to South Africans to take good care of themselves: keep warm and avoid the cold, if possible do get a flu vaccine this season. Pursue healthy lifestyles by eating well, exercising even while under lockdown in your homes and present early if you have flu- like symptoms.

For those on chronic medication, please adhere to your treatment. Please know your HIV status and adhere to your ARV's if you are a person living with HIV.

Healthy bodies with strong immune systems and healthy, positive minds are key in this war against COVID-19

We also thank you all for the messages of encouragement, inspiration and appreciation which give us strength during these trying times.

Please continue to stay home and stay safe.

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