

ADDRESS TO THE NATION BY PRESIDENT OF THE REPUBLIC,
NANA ADDO DANKWA AKUFO-ADDU,
ON UPDATES TO GHANA'S ENHANCED RESPONSE TO THE
CORONAVIRUS PANDEMIC, ON FRIDAY, 27TH MARCH, 2020.

Fellow Ghanaians, good evening.

I have come to your homes, once again, as promised, on the matter which continues to grip not only the attention of the nation, but also of the entire world – the Coronavirus pandemic.

At the time of my last broadcast, some six (6) days ago, Ghana had recorded twenty-one (21) confirmed cases of infections, with virtually all the cases being imported. I took the step to close all our borders, and I ordered a mandatory quarantine and testing of all the one thousand and thirty (1,030) persons who arrived at the airport at the time of the announcement till the day the borders were closed. Indeed, seventy-eight (78) of the persons put under quarantine have since tested positive for the virus. It is these additional confirmations that have increased dramatically our total number of cases to one hundred and thirty-seven (137). Indeed, 97% of all confirmed cases are travelers who brought the disease from outside our shores. Of the remaining fifty-nine (59) confirmed cases, fifty-three (53) are receiving treatment and are doing well, and they will be discharged should their second test results prove negative. Fourteen (14) of them are being managed at home in self-isolation. Four (4) persons, who had tested positive for the virus, but were aged and had other serious, underlying medical conditions, have lost their lives. May their souls rest in perfect peace. Thankfully, two (2) persons have made full recoveries.

Fellow Ghanaians, the oath of office I swore on 7th January, 2017 demands that I dedicate myself to the service and well-being of you, the Ghanaian people. It is my job to protect you, and I am determined to do just that.

As I have said before, 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.

Thus far, we have succeeded in halting any more importations of the virus into our country, and I thank the overwhelming majority of you for adhering to the good hygiene and social distancing protocols announced in my first broadcast to you.

However, prevailing circumstances mean that stricter measures have to be put in place to contain and halt the spread of the virus within our country, especially in Accra, Tema, Ksoa and Kumasi, which have been identified by the Ghana Health Service as the “hotspots” of the infections. In doing this, we cannot afford to copy blindly, and do all the things some other well-developed countries are doing. There is no one-size-fits-all approach to this pandemic. We have a unique situation in our country, and we must take it into account in dealing with the disease, whilst meeting all the six (6) key WHO guidelines on the most effective ways of combating the pandemic. Even though it may be said that the number of our infections is still, relatively, low, if we act now purposefully, we have a chance of preventing an escalation of our numbers.

So, effective 1am on Monday, 30th March, some forty-eight hours from now, I have imposed, pursuant to the powers granted the President of the Republic, under the Imposition of Restrictions Act, 2020 (Act 1012), restrictions on movement of persons in the Greater Accra Metropolitan Area (GAMA, which includes Awutu Senya East), and the Greater Kumasi Metropolitan Area and contiguous districts, for a period of two (2) weeks, subject to review. It will give us the opportunity to try to halt the spread of the virus, and scale-up effectively contact tracing of persons who have come into contact with infected persons, test them for the virus, and, if necessary, quarantine and isolate them for treatment, should they prove to have the virus.

In Greater Accra, the following areas will be affected:

1. Accra Metropolis;
2. Tema Metropolis;
3. Tema West Municipality;
4. Ledzokuku Municipality;
5. Krowor Municipality;
6. Adentan Municipality;
7. Ashiaman Municipality;

8. La-Nkwantanang-Madina Municipality;
9. La-Dade-Kotopon Municipality;
10. Okaikwei North Municipality;
11. Ablekuma North Municipality;
12. Ablekuma West Municipality;
13. Ablekuma Central Municipality;
14. Ayawaso East Municipality;
15. Ayawaso North Municipality;
16. Ayawaso West Municipality;
17. Ayawaso Central Municipality
18. Ga West Municipality;
19. Ga North Municipality;
20. Ga Central Municipality;
21. Ga South Municipality;
22. Ga East Municipality;
23. Korle-Klottey Municipality;
24. Weija/Gbawe Municipality;
25. Kpone Katamanso Municipality; and
26. Awutu Senya East Municipality.

In the Greater Kumasi Metropolitan Area and contiguous districts, the following areas are affected:

1. Kumasi Metropolis;
2. Asokwa Municipality;
3. Suame Municipality;
4. Old Tafo Municipality;
5. Oforikrom Municipality;
6. Asokore Mampong Municipality;
7. Kwadaso Municipality;
8. Atwima Nwabiagya Municipality;
9. Kwabre East Municipality;
10. Ejisu Municipality;
11. Afigya-Kwabre South District;
12. Bosomtwi District;
13. Atwima Kwanwoma District; and
14. Atwima Nwabiagya North District.

This, in essence, means that everyone resident in these areas must stay at home for the next two weeks. However, if you must go out, it must only be to get essential items such as food, medicine, water, undertake banking transactions, or to use public toilet facilities. But, as much as possible, stay at home.

There shall be, during this period, no inter-city movement of vehicles and aircrafts for private or commercial purposes for the areas of the restrictive measures, except for vehicles and aircrafts providing essential services and those carrying cargo. Riders of motorbikes are not allowed to carry any additional person, and all intra-city passenger vehicles, such as trotros and taxis, must reduce the number of passengers in order to observe appropriate social distancing and hygiene protocols. Additionally, all commercial vehicle stations shall observe appropriate hygiene protocols and social distancing. The Ministry of Transport has engaged the transport operators and unions in this regard. The Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has also engaged with the Metropolitan, Municipal and District Assemblies and the leaders of the market associations in the country to make satisfactory arrangements about the operation of the markets that ensure observance of social distancing and enhanced hygiene protocols. In any event, only persons involved in the food value chain can operate in the markets during this period.

Individuals and institutions providing the following services shall be exempted from the restrictions:

- i Members of the Executive, Legislature and the Judiciary;
- ii production, distribution and marketing of food, beverages, pharmaceuticals, medicine, paper and plastic packages;
- iii environmental and sanitation activities;
- iv staff of VALCO;
- v road and railway construction workers;
- vi mining workers;
- vii fisherfolk;
- viii members of the security agencies assigned lawful duties;
- ix staff of electricity, water, telecommunications, e-commerce and digital service providers; and
- x staff of fuel stations.

Fellow Ghanaians, to accelerate the contact tracing process, and ensure we curtail the spread of the virus in the shortest time, we will use the military and police to assist health authorities to expediate the process. We will also pursue a policy of testing ALL CONTACTS of people tested positive.

The affected areas, and, indeed, all other regions have earmarked designated isolation and treatment centres for the management of suspected and confirmed cases, as well as the selection of facilities for mandatory quarantine is being carried out. An intensive public health education and community awareness on social distancing and hand washing will be carried out.

It is very important that we protect all healthcare providers with Personal Protective Equipment (PPEs) to make sure they do not contract the virus in the process of protecting our lives. Government has, therefore, taken delivery of additional PPEs and more are being procured. Distribution of seventeen thousand (17,000) coveralls, three hundred and fifty thousand (350,000) masks, seventeen thousand (17,000) goggles, two thousand four hundred (2,400) non-contact thermometers, three hundred and fifty thousand (350,000) gloves, twenty-five thousand (25,000) sanitisers, and thirty-thousand (30,000) tests kits are ongoing for healthcare personnel and those undertaking contact tracing and testing. We are recruiting one thousand (1,000) community health workers and an additional thousand (1,000) volunteers to help in this endeavour. One hundred pick-up vehicles and two thousand, five hundred (2,500) tablets have been mobilized for the exercise.

Fellow Ghanaians, I am urging all of you to bear with these additional measures. They are being done in the interest of all of us. They are, hopefully, only for a short while. These additional measures, together with those earlier announced, are what will help us defeat the virus. And, we must be united in our determination and efforts to overcome this challenge. This, certainly, is not the time for politicking or the display of partisanship. The virus does not care which party you belong to, neither is it, as we have seen, a respecter of persons. The enemy is the virus, and not each other.

As I have stated in my earlier broadcasts, all the measures I have announced tonight will be subject to constant review.

Fellow Ghanaians, we are in this together, and Government will stand by you. We are aware that there will be discomfort and difficulties for all of us over the next couple of weeks. As a responsive Government, we will continue to implement bold measures to mitigate the impact of the Coronavirus on businesses and households and ensure that job losses are minimized. The Minister for Finance has been directed by me to prepare, for approval by Parliament, a Coronavirus Alleviation Programme to address the disruption in economic activities, the hardship of our people, and to rescue and revitalize our industries. He will, then, immediately make available a minimum of one billion cedis (GH¢1 billion) to households and businesses, particularly small and medium scale enterprises. The commercial banks are, in addition, responding to the Bank of Ghana's 1.5% decrease in the Policy Rate and 2% in reserve requirement with a three billion-cedi (GH¢3 billion) facility, to support industry especially in the pharmaceutical, hospitality, service and manufacturing sectors.

We are providing additional relief, such as extension of the tax filing date from April to June; a two percent (2%) reduction of interest rates by banks, effective 1st April, 2020; the granting by the banks of a six (6) month moratorium of principal repayments to entities in the airline and hospitality industries, i.e. hotels, restaurants, car rentals, food vendors, taxis, and uber operators. All other sector credit exposures will be reviewed on a case by case basis; mobile money users can send up to one hundred cedis (GH¢100) for free; and a one hundred percent (100%) to three hundred percent (300%) increase in the daily transaction limits for mobile money transactions

Let me also reiterate that the ban on public gatherings, religious or social, is still in force. Anyone, irrespective of status, religion or ethnicity, who is found to be flouting them will be dealt with fully in accordance with law. The security services have been clothed with the necessary power to enforce these measures, and I assure you that they will do so responsibly, but without fear or favour, ill-will or malice.

Fellow Ghanaians, with the Bank of Ghana predicting a worst-case GDP growth rate scenario of 2.5% for 2020, should the virus continue to linger for the rest of the year, the effects on our economy would be dire. However, as we have demonstrated over the course of the last three years, where we inherited an economy that was growing at 3.4% and transformed it into one

which has grown by an average of 7% over the last three (3) years, I assure you that we know what to do to bring back our economy back to life. What we do not know how to do is to bring people back to life.

We will, therefore, protect people's lives, then their livelihoods.

For the next two weeks, I urge all of you, especially residents in the affected areas of Greater Accra and Greater Kumasi, to be reminded, every day, that the frontline of the fight against Coronavirus is your front door. If you cross it, you and your family will likely be infected. So, please, stay at home. It is vitally important that each one of us, in all parts of the country, continues to observe the social distancing and enhanced hygiene protocols, for they are the weapons of our defence against the virus.

I am announcing tonight the establishment of a COVID-19 Fund, to be managed by an independent board of trustees, and chaired by former Chief Justice, Sophia Akuffo, to receive contributions and donations from the public to assist in the welfare of the needy and the vulnerable. I have directed the Controller and Accountant General to pay my next three months' salary, i.e. April, May and June, into this Fund. Let me also thank, from the bottom of my heart, the churches, financial institutions and individuals who have already made donations to help in this fight. God richly bless them.

We can defeat this virus if we all commit ourselves to respecting all the measures that have been outlined. I am confident that Ghanaians will comply with them, and the security services will not have to intervene, with extraordinary means, to enforce them. The love of country is deeply embedded in all of us, and I assure you that the security forces will conduct themselves with the necessary professionalism.

Mesere mo, nsem aa makayi, yen nyinaa yen mbo mɔden na yen disu. Nyankopɔn adaroma, ebe boa yen.

Minkpa nye fai, sanee ni nwiee, nye fee nye bo mɔden ni nye ye no. Nyɔmo dromɔ, e baa wa wo fee.

We have prayed to Almighty God to heal our land, and I know that, by the Grace of God, He has heard our cry. Nonetheless, each one of us must do his or her part.

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

I thank you for your attention. Good night.