

ADDRESS BY H.E. MUHAMMADU BUHARI, PRESIDENT OF THE FEDERAL
REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA ON THE EXTENSION OF COVID- 19 PANDEMIC
LOCKDOWN AT THE STATE HOUSE, ABUJA
MONDAY, 13TH APRIL, 2020

1. Fellow Nigerians

2. In my address on Sunday, 29th March, 2020, I asked the residents of Lagos and Ogun States as well as the Federal Capital Territory to stay at home for an initial period of fourteen days starting from Monday, 30th March 2020.

3. Many State Governments also introduced similar restrictions.

4. As your democratically elected leaders, we made this very difficult decision knowing fully well it will severely disrupt your livelihoods and bring undue hardship to you, your loved ones and your communities.

5. However, such sacrifices are needed to limit the spread of COVID-19 in our country. They were necessary to save lives.

6. Our objective was, and still remains, to contain the spread of the Coronavirus and to provide space, time and resources for an aggressive and collective action.

7. The level of compliance to the COVID-19 guidelines issued has been generally good across the country. I wish to thank you all most sincerely for the great sacrifice you are making for each other at this critical time.

8. I will take this opportunity to recognise the massive support from our traditional rulers, the Christian Association of Nigeria (CAN) and the Nigerian

Supreme Council for Islamic Affairs (NSCIA) during this pandemic.

9. I also acknowledge the support and contributions received from public spirited individuals, the business community and our international partners and friends.

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10. I must also thank the media houses, celebrities and other public figures for the great work they are doing in sensitizing our citizens on hygienic practices, social distancing and issues associated with social gatherings.

11. As a result of the overwhelming support and cooperation received, we were able to achieve a lot during these 14 days of initial lockdown.

12. We implemented comprehensive public health measures that intensified our case identification, testing, isolation and contact tracing capabilities.

13. To date, we have identified 92% of all identified contacts while doubling the number of testing laboratories in the country and raising our testing capacity to 1,500 tests per day.

14. We also trained over 7,000 Healthcare workers on infection prevention and control while deploying NCDC teams to 19 states of the federation.

15. Lagos and Abuja today have the capacity to admit some 1,000 patients each across several treatment centres.

16. Many State Governments have also made provisions for isolation wards and treatment centres. We will also build similar centers near our airports and land borders.

17. Using our resources and those provided through donations, we will adequately equip and man these centres in the coming weeks. Already, health care workers across all the treatment centers have been provided with the personal protective equipment that they need to safely carry out the care they provide.

18. Our hope and prayers are that we do not have to use all these centres. But we will be ready for all eventualities.

19. At this point, I must recognise the incredible work being done by our healthcare workers and volunteers across the country especially in frontline areas of Lagos and Ogun States as well as the Federal Capital Territory.

20. You are our heroes and as a nation, we will forever remain grateful for your sacrifice during this very difficult time. More measures to motivate our health care workers are being introduced which we will announce in the coming weeks.

21. As a nation, we are on the right track to win the fight against COVID-19.

22. However, I remain concerned about the increase in number of confirmed cases and deaths being reported across the world and in Nigeria specifically.

23. On 30th March 2020, when we started our lockdown in conforming with medical and scientific advice, the total number of confirmed cases across the world was over 780,000.

24. Yesterday, the number of confirmed COVID-19 cases globally was over one million, eight hundred and fifty thousand. This figure is more than double in two weeks!

25. In the last fourteen days alone, over 70,000 people have died due to this disease.

26. In the same period, we have seen the health system of even the most developed nations being overwhelmed by this virus.
27. Here in Nigeria, we had 131 confirmed cases of COVID-19 in 12 States on 30th March 2020. We had two fatalities then.
28. This morning, Nigeria had 323 confirmed cases in twenty States. Unfortunately we now have ten fatalities. Lagos State remains the center and accounts for 54% of the confirmed cases in Nigeria. When combined with the FCT, the two locations represent over 71% of the confirmed cases in Nigeria.
29. Most of our efforts will continue to focus in these two locations.
30. Majority of the confirmed cases in Lagos and the FCT are individuals with recent international travel history or those that came into contact with returnees from international trips.
31. By closing our airports and land borders and putting strict conditions for seaport activities, we have reduced the impact of external factors on our country. However, the increase in the number of States with positive cases is alarming.
32. The National Centre for Disease Control has informed me that, a large proportion of new infections are now occurring in our communities, through person-to-person contacts. So we must pay attention to the danger of close contact between person to person.
33. At this point, I will remind all Nigerians to continue to take responsibility for the recommended measures to prevent transmission, including maintaining physical distancing, good personal hygiene and staying at home.
34. In addition, I have signed the Quarantine Order in this regard and additional regulations to provide clarity in respect of the control measures for the COVID-19

pandemic which will be released soon.

35. The public health response to COVID-19 is built on our ability to detect, test and admit cases as well as trace all their contacts. While I note some appreciable progress, we can achieve a lot more.

36. Today, the cessation of movement, physical distancing measures and the prohibition of mass gatherings remain the most efficient and effective way of reducing the transmission of the virus. By sustaining these measures, combined with extensive testing and contact tracing, we can take control and limit the spread of the disease.

37. Our approach to the virus remains in 2 steps – First, to protect the lives of our fellow Nigerians and residents living here and second, to preserve the livelihoods of workers and business owners.

38. With this in mind and having carefully considered the briefings and Report from the Presidential Task Force and the various options offered, it has become necessary to extend the current restriction of movement in Lagos and Ogun States as well as the FCT for another 14 days effective from 11:59 pm on Monday, 13th of April, 2020. I am therefore once again asking you all to work with Government in this fight.

39. This is not a joke. It is a matter of life and death. Mosques in Makkah and Madina have been closed. The Pope celebrated Mass on an empty St. Peter's Square. The famous Notre Dame cathedral in Paris held Easter Mass with less than 10 people. India, Italy and France are in complete lockdown. Other countries are in the process of following suit. We cannot be lax.

40. The previously issued guidelines on exempted services shall remain.

41. This is a difficult decision to take, but I am convinced that this is the right decision. The evidence is clear.

42. The repercussions of any premature end to the lockdown action are unimaginable.

43. We must not lose the gains achieved thus far. We must not allow a rapid increase in community transmission. We must endure a little longer.

44. I will therefore take this opportunity to urge you all to notify the relevant authorities if you or your loved ones develop any symptoms. I will also ask our health care professionals to redouble their efforts to identify all suspected cases, bring them into care and prevent transmission to others.

45. No country can afford the full impact of a sustained restriction of movement on its economy. I am fully aware of the great difficulties experienced especially by those who earn a daily wage such as traders, day-workers, artisans and manual workers.

46. For this group, their sustenance depends on their ability to go out. Their livelihoods depend on them mingling with others and about seeking work. But despite these realities we must not change the restrictions.

47. In the past two weeks, we announced palliative measures such as food distribution, cash transfers and loans repayment waivers to ease the pains of our restrictive policies during this difficult time. These palliatives will be sustained.

48. I have also directed that the current social register be expanded from 2.6 million households to 3.6 million households in the next two weeks. This means we will support an additional one million homes with our social investment programs. A technical committee is working on this and will submit a report to me by the end of this week.

49. The Security Agencies have risen to the challenges posed by this unprecedented situation with gallantry and I commend them. I urge them to continue to maintain utmost vigilance, firmness as well as restraint in enforcing the restriction orders while not neglecting statutory security responsibilities.

50. Fellow Nigerians, follow the instructions on social distancing. The irresponsibility of the few can lead to the death of the many. Your freedom ends where other people's rights begin.

51. The response of our State Governors has been particularly impressive, especially in aligning their policies and actions to those of the Federal Government.

52. In the coming weeks, I want to assure you that the Federal Government, through the Presidential Task Force, will do whatever it takes to support you in this very difficult period. I have no doubt that, by working together and carefully following the rules, we shall get over this pandemic.

53. I must also thank the Legislative arm of Government for all its support and donations in this very difficult period. This collaboration is critical to the short and long-term success of all the measures that we have instituted in response to the pandemic.

54. As a result of this pandemic, the world as we know it has changed. The way we interact with each other, conduct our businesses and trade, travel, educate our children and earn our livelihoods will be different.

55. To ensure our economy adapts to this new reality, I am directing the Ministers of Industry, Trade and Investment, Communication and Digital Economy, Science and Technology, Transportation, Aviation, Interior, Health, Works and Housing, Labour and Employment and Education to jointly develop a comprehensive policy for a "Nigerian economy functioning with COVID-19".

56. The Ministers will be supported by the Presidential Economic Advisory Council and Economic Sustainability Committee in executing this mandate.

57. I am also directing the Minister of Agriculture and Rural Development, the National Security Adviser, the Vice Chairman, National Food Security Council and the Chairman, Presidential Fertiliser Initiative to work with the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 to ensure the impact of this pandemic on our 2020 farming season is minimized.

58. Finally, I want to thank the members of the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19 for all their hard work so far. Indeed, the patriotism shown in your work is exemplary and highly commendable.

59. Fellow Nigerians, I have no doubt that by working together and carefully following the rules, we shall get over this pandemic and emerge stronger in the end.

60. I thank you all for listening and may God bless the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

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