



**HONOURABLE JAMES MARAPE, MP  
PRIME MINISTER OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA**

13<sup>th</sup> March, 2020

**ADDRESS TO THE NATION**

My fellow Papua New Guineans:

The world is currently facing a common enemy – the coronavirus disease, known as COVID-19. On 11 March 2020, the World Health Organization declared COVID-19 as a pandemic.

As of today, there are more than 132,000 cases of COVID-19 and almost 5,000 deaths reported globally. There are 122 countries, territories and areas that have reported cases. It has also come to our Pacific neighbour of French Polynesia.

Papua New Guinea, as I speak to you today, has no case of COVID-19. However, we have to continue to be on high alert as the risk of COVID-19 entering Papua New Guinea, just like the rest of our region and the world, is very high.

The PNG Government, since January, has recognized this threat to our country and we have started our preparedness measures.

We have a team of dedicated health experts and professionals who are work round-the-clock to ensure we have measures in place to prevent, detect, manage and treat any case of COVID-19.

We have developed a COVID-19 preparedness and response plan that outlines key measures from across different scenarios: from alert phase, containment and mitigation. It has detailed actions and requirements identified in every phase and the budget for those activities has already been approved by NEC on Wednesday this week.

These codes are the following

<b>Code</b>	<b>Scenario</b>
<b>ALERT (green)</b>	No case of COVID-19 in PNG <i>(Cases are reported outside of Papua New Guinea)</i>
<b>CONTAINMENT (orange)</b>	Confirmed case of COVID-19 in PNG <i>(At least one case confirmed in PNG)</i>
<b>MITIGATION (red)</b>	Community spread of COVID-19

*(Human-to-human transmission in clusters within the community)*

- ❑ We continue to put in measures to prevent entry of the virus into the country. We have personnel at our points of entry who are screening inbound passengers. Our surveillance team conducts follow-up checks of those travellers.
- ❑ However, even with these measures, it would be wrong to assume that we will not get the virus. We continue to prepare for the worst-case scenario and make our system ready to response.

Some of the additional measures we are taking are;

- Prevent all passengers travelling from the following countries from entering PNG until they have completed a 14 day quarantine outside the country – these countries include; Italy, Iran, South Korea, Japan and Mainland China.
- Place a 60 day ban on all public servants from official overseas travel.
- Ban on Cruise Ships and yachts used for leisure with more than 15 people on board.
- Setting up quarantine facilities initially in Port Moresby and Lae and eventually in Rabaul and Mount Hagen as part of our contingency plan preparations.
- Ban on boarder travel until further notice.
- For the next 90 days requiring quarantine clearance must be cleared only at the declared ports of Motukea, Lae and Rabaul. Severe penalties will be imposed on overseas sailing directly to any unauthorized ports.
- Under our surveillance system we are keeping date and monitoring the movement of people coming in and out of the country and particularly where they are in PNG using the supplementary health declaration forms.
- Any persons of interest showing signs and symptoms are further interviewed and self-quarantined.
- As of 13<sup>th</sup> March, we have tested 16 persons of interest in our IMR WHO Accredited Laboratory in Goroka and all have returned negative results for COVID – 19.
- PNG IMR are also preparing to conduct COVID – 19 testing in Port Moresby and Madang within two weeks.
- We will review and update our measures regularly, based on the risk assessment.

I would like to thank the Department of Health, Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, Immigration and Citizenship Authority, National Airports Cooperation, Air Niugini and the World Health Organization and other development partners for all your efforts so far. While your efforts have been commendable, I urge all involved in our response including government agencies, development partners and the general public to remain vigilant as we deal with the threat of this terrible contagious illness.

I recommend that you continue to read verifiable information and inform yourselves correctly. A hotline (7196 0813) has also been established to address the immediate need for information or reporting and to answer questions people may have.

As the Government continues to put in place measures, the PNG people have the role to play. There are very simple things you can do and I want to remind you of these measures:

1. Wash your hands regularly with soap and water or clean hands with an alcohol-based hand rub.
2. If you cough or sneeze—do it into your flexed elbow or use a tissue. Dispose of the tissue immediately into a closed rubbish bin, and then wash your hands.
3. Clean your house, offices or stores. Disinfect surfaces, tables or work desks.
4. Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.
5. If you feel unwell, stay at home and avoid crowded places. Do not spread the disease to others.

The health teams continue to conduct risk assessment. Any further updates will be released regularly to ensure that citizens are kept abreast of the status of coronavirus globally and in PNG.

**Honourable James Marape, MP**  
**Prime Minister of Papua New Guinea**