

**My Fellow Zimbabweans.**

On 16 May 2020, I made my COVID-19 Update Statement, wherein I announced that Zimbabwe would continue on the Level 2 lockdown for an indefinite period. I further committed that the situation would be reviewed at regular intervals. Hence my address today.

Allow me to begin with a word of gratitude. Thank you all for your patience; thank you for your perseverance.

Over the last few months, you have been burdened with a truly heavy task. This is not an ordinary period in our history. A new normal has emerged. For the first time, we have asked you NOT to go to work, NOT to see your families, and to keep your distance from each other. This is the very opposite of the Zimbabwean way which is characterised by warmth and closeness. The vast majority of Zimbabweans have acted selflessly, and with great responsibility.

Like a country in wartime, you put your nation first and put aside individual needs and rights.

You understood that the battle against this deadly virus which has taken hundreds of thousands of lives around the world, is an existential threat; one which is of the proportion of a conventional war.

**My fellow Zimbabweans**, you came together. You stood strong and united. The resolve you continue to demonstrate is admirable, and for this, I thank you most sincerely. You protected your loved ones, you protected the people of Zimbabwe. Your actions to date have saved many lives.

As we continue returning to work, we must once again refocus, recalibrate and revamp. Let us recall that Zimbabwe was in the midst of deep and broad reforms. We were reforming distortions which have bedevilled our economy for decades. We were reforming the old, creating the new, and building stronger foundations for a more prosperous Zimbabwe.

We began to reform our economic landscape as well as our political space and media space; by removing antiquated laws and opening up new channels for dialogue and debate.

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Unfortunately, just as Zimbabwe was opening up both internally and externally, we were forced, like much of the world, to close. To close our societies, to close our markets, to close our borders.

**Ladies and Gentlemen, brothers and sisters, fellow Zimbabweans.**

Zimbabwe must once again be open. The freedoms we promised at the outset of the new dispensation must once again be felt across the whole of our society.

**Freedom** of assembly.

**Freedoms** of speech and religion.

**Freedom** to vote in free and open elections.

**Freedom** to flourish.

Likewise, the creation of jobs, the commitment to new opportunities for our talented youth, must once again be driven to the top of our agenda.

We cannot and will not allow the period of COVID-19 to appear in our history books as anything more than a mere hurdle which we jumped over along the path to prosperity.

As your President, I commit that we will work twice as hard, work with promise and purpose, to improve your lives, and to give your children a better future. It is time to accelerate our development. From the pains of the pandemic, we must now find new impetus in rebuilding. The liberalisation of our economy must continue in earnest. This includes the privatisation of bloated state industries which must now be expedited. Investment commitments must now be turned into tangible jobs. Our creative people must be allowed to grow and prosper.

Reforms, stuck in the wheels of bureaucracy, must be unleashed, catalysed and implemented. The time for action is now. However, as the workforce is slowly released from a painful lockdown, let us remember that we are not returning to the old normal, but to a very NEW normal which must cause each and every one of us to rethink our lives. How we communicate, how we do business, how we meet and greet, and how we protect the health of our neighbours, our family, and indeed ourselves.

In this new normal, we must be vigilant. We must not rest. The virus is still with us. It has neither disappeared nor been destroyed. It has neither vanished nor been

vanquished; it lives amongst us. So please act with caution. Wear a mask at all times when you are outside your homes.

Don't cough into your hands and maintain social distance wherever possible. Do not spend time in enclosed spaces with strangers, and ensure that windows are open in workspaces. Wash or sanitize your hands regularly and thoroughly.

This may seem rudimentary, but these small acts may just save the life of your grandmother or grandfather, brother or sister, mother or father, friend or co-worker; even your own life.

This will not last forever. We will - someday - return to the warm ways of Zimbabwe once again. However, the status-quo and the immediate future demand our active diligence.

Let us influence and educate each other, and our friends and family on how to minimise the risks of infection. The virus must be kept in check. Only with strict discipline can we fully get back on course towards building a functioning, modern and prosperous economy.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank my Executive team which continues to steer this economic ship through the roughest waters Zimbabwe has ever seen in the recent past.

Droughts, cyclones, a global economic downturn, in addition to a pandemic which the world had not witnessed in a century. These are hardly the conditions in which to implement tough spending cuts and deep structural economic reforms. But we have no choice. If we do not reform now, we will continue to drown in debt or peddle along in mediocrity. Zimbabweans deserve better. Zimbabwe deserves better.

Although our lockdown remains at Level 2, let us begin to further open up, remembering that we all have a role to play. Government, hand in hand with an empowered private sector, will do all in its power to open up the economy, to provide the jobs and the opportunities the people of Zimbabwe so richly deserve.

Under this review, we recognise that the current spike in the number of positive cases, requires that we take a more cautious approach in relaxing the lockdown restrictions.

As such, the following adjustments to the lockdown are made:

1--All our people in the informal sector, who have not formally registered themselves or their enterprises, are directed to do so forthwith. Once they can prove that such registration has been made, they can resume their operations. Upon resuming their work, they are compelled to adhere to the laid down COVID-19 prevention requirements, such as the wearing of masks, washing or sanitization of hands and social distancing;

2--Gathering for purposes of worship must remain at a maximum of fifty and in full compliance with all the COVID-19 prevention measures;

3--People are urged to travel when it is absolutely necessary; And

4--The moratorium on rent payment, made during the early phases of the lockdown is hereby lifted. Rent arrears can be settled in instalments spread over a period of six months.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwe is grateful for the support we continue to receive in our fight against the pandemic, from both internal institutions and organisations, as well as from external governments, institutions and other development partners. I am happy to announce that we have once again received a considerable consignment of PPEs and other materials from the People's Republic of China. We remain grateful to His Excellency President Xi Jinping, and the Government and People of China for their solidarity and support.

I would like to applaud and congratulate the African Union, through the AU Bureau, for the innovative tech-driven strategies that have been developed to ensure equitable and affordable access to all materials related to the prevention and fight against the COVID-19. We further commend the continued calls by the African Union member states for the lifting of sanctions against our country.

Finally, I exhort all the people of Zimbabwe to adapt to the new normal with a new, positive attitude. We are a determined, hardworking people. A people who know how to work closely and cooperatively. United in peace and harmony, we shall overcome.

**God bless you all.**

**God bless Zimbabwe.**

**I thank you.**