



## ECOWAS MEASURES TO PREVENT AND CONTAIN THE SPREAD OF CORONA VIRUS DISEASE 2019 (COVID-19)

ECOWAS Commission notes with concern the adverse impact of the ravaging Corona virus disease 2019 (Covid-19) since its outbreak in December 2019. As at 16 March 2020, 16.00 hours (*Central European Time - CET*), the World Health Organization (WHO) revealed that the pandemic had infected more than 168,000 people and claimed the lives of more than 6,000 people in over 140 countries, areas or territories worldwide.

COVID-19 is present in our region and the situation is rapidly changing. As at 16 March 2020, 16.00 hours (CET), WHO published that 38 cases had been reported with zero death across Senegal (26), Burkina Faso (3), Côte d'Ivoire (3), Nigeria (2), Ghana (2), Guinea (1) and Togo (1). Of all these, Senegal is currently the only Member State with local transmission with a hotspot in the locality of Touba. ECOWAS stands in solidarity with the affected ECOWAS Member States and other countries.

The spread of the virus has negative health, social and economic impacts on the ECOWAS Member States. The negative economic impacts include fall in revenue from commodity prices which are exogenously determined, inflationary pressures due to shortages in supply of food and pharmaceuticals, slow down in investment and unbudgeted increases in health spending. However, ECOWAS shall continue to ensure that the economic gains achieved by the region are not reversed.

ECOWAS Commission and the other Institutions remain committed to their mandate and the safety of their staff and other stakeholders. In this regard, ECOWAS would therefore take all necessary preventive and containment measures to mitigate the spread of the Covid-19 virus.

In pursuance of appropriate measures to mitigate the spread of Covid-19, and to ensure that staff are available for possible deployment to support Member States, the ECOWAS Commission on the advice of West African Health Organization (WAHO) has decided in the abundance of caution that effective immediately:

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## **A. Missions**

1. Only critically necessary missions will be approved;
2. All Missions that have not started will be resubmitted to the Head of Institution for approval;
3. WAHO Covid-19 Guidance for ECOWAS Missions will apply after approval;
4. All staff who have been on mission to any high burden country or country with local transmission within 2 weeks of returning to their duty station should go into self-isolation for fourteen (14) calendar days, counting day 1 as the day the staff left the hotspot country. Transit at the airport does not apply;
5. Staff wishing to work from home must telephone their superior officers (such as the Commissioner and Director in the case of ECOWAS Commission) every morning to report, leaving at least two immediate contact details, e.g. Telephone and Whatsapp or other;
6. During the period of self-isolation, staff must remain in their duty stations and continue to work from home using remote technology – Internet, Telephone, Skype, WhatsApp etc;
7. Those on self-isolation must strictly comply with WHO guidelines for self-isolation; and
8. Any staff that develops any symptoms – fever, cough, difficulty breathing etc – should not only self-isolate but should also call dedicated telephone number or Covid-19 Toll free number in the Member State where they work.

## **B. Meetings**

1. All meetings involving participants traveling on international flights are hereby suspended until further notice;
2. Local meetings involving more than 50 participants at a specific point in time are discouraged;
3. All meetings should observe the rules of social distancing such as distancing of at least 1.5 metres apart; and
4. Staff members are encouraged to make use of technologies through video conferencing to conduct meetings with international participants.

## **C. Personal Hygiene**

To take care of their health and protect other people, all staff members and other stakeholders are advised to comply with the health advisory on the Covid-19 virus issued by WAHO and the national or regional centre for disease control.

## **D. Help Desk on Management of COVID-19**

1. A Committee on Corona Virus Management is hereby established at the ECOWAS Commission;

*Yes*

2. All other ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies are requested to establish a similar Committee;
3. WAHO shall remain the ECOWAS technical institution to provide advice and guidance on the management of the crisis;
4. Updates on the management of Covid-19 shall be provided by WAHO.

The above measures will remain in place for four (4) weeks from the date of publication unless reviewed earlier. Further advice on this rapidly changing situation will be given in due course.

I urge all staff not to panic but ensure that they remain calm and healthy. All staff are advised to go about their normal duties calmly whilst practicing personal hygiene and social distancing in a professional manner. Health is Wealth.

H.E. Jean-Claude Kassi BROU  
President, ECOWAS Commission  
16 March 2020

