



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

1. ECOWAS Commission continues to monitor the exponential increase in the number of suspected cases of the ravaging Coronavirus disease 2019 (Covid-19) worldwide including our region. WAHO reported that by 21 March, there had been 173 confirmed cases in all the ECOWAS Member States except Guinea Bissau and Mali. The affected 13 Member States and the numbers of confirmed cases are Burkina Faso 64, Senegal 47, Ghana 16, Côte d'Ivoire 14, Nigeria 12, Togo 9, Liberia 3, Benin 2, Guinea 2, Niger 1, The Gambia 1, Togo 1, and Cabo Verde 1; with 3 deaths in Burkina Faso.
2. Let me assure all staff members and other stakeholders that, at ECOWAS, we are closely monitoring the situation and are committed to ensuring the safety of all our employees and their families.
3. As part of our sensitization strategy, WAHO has prepared a Risk Communication Advice for Staff of the Community Institutions and Agencies concerning Covid-19 pandemic. The document will be circulated to all staff on Monday 23 March 2020. Some of the advice is contained in this Statement, which is an update to the Statement I issued on 16 March 2020.
4. The key updates are as follows:
  - A. Missions
    - i. All missions are suspended until further notice except those with special waivers from the Heads of Institutions;
    - ii. Heads of Institutions, other statutory appointees, Secretaries General, Chief Registrar, Permanent and Resident Representatives and Directors must **STRONGLY** encourage home working by staff:
      - Anyone with even a mild cough or low-grade fever (37.3 degrees Celsius or more) needs to stay at home and self-isolate;
      - Staff should also stay home and work from home if they have had to take simple medications, such as paracetamol, ibuprofen or aspirin, which may mask symptoms of infection;
      - Staff should self-isolate and work from home if they feel they may have come in contact with a Covid-19 patient but such staff must comply with the provisions for home-working in the earlier Statement I issued on 16 March 2020;

- iii. Staff who are at higher risk of Covid-19 should avoid any travel and should practice social distancing at all times. Staff at higher risk include those over 60 years, those with depressed immunity, or those with medical conditions such as diabetes, heart and lung disease;
- iv. Staff returning from any area of high burden of Covid-19 should self-isolate for 14 days and monitor themselves for symptoms.

#### **B. Meetings**

- i. All international meetings continue to be postponed until further notice;
- ii. Local or internal meetings involving more than 25 participants at a specific point in time are cancelled;
- iii. Staff should NOT attend any meeting if they have any symptoms or feel unwell, and meeting invitations must emphasize this to all participants in advance;
- iv. Attendance list with all contact details is MANDATORY and must be retained for at least one month;
- v. Staff members are encouraged to make use of video conference technologies or computer applications such as Microsoft Teams to conduct e-meetings with themselves, officials in Member States, partners and other stakeholders. Staff may contact the Commission's Department of Telecommunications and Information Technology (TIT) or their Institutions' IT officers for assistance.

#### **C. Restrictions on Visits to ECOWAS Premises**

- i. All private visits to any of the premises of ECOWAS Institutions and Agencies including Commission's offices (Headquarters/Niger House/River Plaza) are FORBIDDEN for the next fourteen (14) days except with special clearance from the Heads of Institutions;
  - ii. Except for security personnel, presence of the staff of the General Administration Department should be restricted to the barest minimum. Commissioner of General Administration, Conference and Protocol will provide the list of critically needed staff.
5. We will continue to work closely with WAHO, the ECOWAS Institution statutorily mandated to provide advice and guidance on all health issues including management of the current health challenge.
  6. I urge all staff to continue to keep strict recommended personal hygiene and remain calm. Regular updates on the evolving situation of COVID -19 in our region and necessary changes in the current policy will be given as necessary.

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