

SEVENTH POST-CABINET PRESS BRIEFING

29TH MARCH, 2022

1.0 ZIMBABWE'S RESPONSE TO THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC AND REPORT ON THE PROCUREMENT AND ROLLOUT OF VACCINES

Cabinet received an update on the Country's Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic, and a Report on Procurement and Roll -Out of Vaccines, as presented by the Chairman of the Ministers' COVID-19 National Committee, Vice President and Minister of Health and Child Care, Honourable Dr. C.G.D.N. Chiwenga.

The nation is being informed that as at 28 March, 2022, the country's cumulative COVID-19 cases stood at 245 927, with 237 295 recoveries and 5 438 deaths. The recovery rate was 96%, with 3 194 active cases having been recorded. The number of new COVID-19 cases decreased to 1 301 during the week under review, compared to the 2 004 recorded the previous week.

The number of cases in need of hospitalisation for COVID-19 continues to decrease, with the country's bed occupancy rate declining to 1.3% during the week under review, from 2.3% the previous week. There were no admissions to intensive care unit.

Regarding the national vaccination programme, Cabinet wishes to inform the public that, as at 28 March, 2022, a total of 4 917 541 first doses of

the COVID-19 vaccine had been administered, while 3 498 431 people had received their second dose. A total of 288 693 third doses have been administered to date. The National Vaccination Blitz saw 481 005 doses being administered between 21 and 25 March, 2022. Cabinet is encouraging those that have not yet been vaccinated to take advantage of this exercise.

The nation is also being informed that the total number of COVID-19 cases detected in schools is on the decrease, and the vaccination of learners is in progress across the country.

Cabinet has resolved that returning residents and visitors are no longer required to present a negative PCR certificate on arrival at ports of entry. Only a valid vaccination certificate showing that they are fully vaccinated against COVID-19 with any one of the WHO-approved vaccines will suffice. This is in recognition of the declining COVID-19 new cases, most of which are now very mild or have no symptoms and increasing vaccination coverage. A negative PCR certificate will only be a requirement if the returning resident or visitor is not fully vaccinated. Government wishes to remind all citizens that COVID-19 is still with us and is, therefore, appealing to all Zimbabweans to continue adhering to the laid down World Health Organisation protocols at all times.

2.0 UPDATE ON PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2022 CHILDREN'S PARTY AND 42ND INDEPENDENCE DAY CELEBRATIONS

The Minister of Local Government and Public Works, as the Acting Chairman of the Cabinet Committee on State Occasions and National Monuments, briefed Cabinet on the 2022 Children's Party and 42nd Anniversary Independence Day Celebrations.

The nation is being informed that preparations for the Celebrations are in full swing, and His Excellency the President will address the nation from Barbourfields Stadium in Bulawayo on 18th April 2022.

This year's Children's Party will be held at State House in Bulawayo, and not Khumalo Hockey Stadium as alluded to earlier, and will be attended by 1 090 learners. The number of learners has been increased in order to afford the children from Bulawayo an opportunity to interact with the First Family.

On a related matter, Cabinet approved the themes for the mass displays and the training for the mass displays commenced on 23 March, 2022.

The nation is being advised that the Independence Flame will be taken from Khami Monument through Bulawayo suburbs on 17 April, 2022, on its way to the Bulawayo Natural Museum of Zimbabwe. It will pass through the following suburbs: Nkulumane; Nketa; Emganwini; Tshabalala; Phelandaba; Pumula; Magwegwe; Gwabalanda; Luveve; Emakhandeni; Entumbane and then the Central Business District.

The onset of the 42nd Anniversary Independence Day Celebrations will be marked by fireworks at midnight on 17 April 2022 and the

Independence Gala will be held outside the Barbourfields Stadium on the 18th of April, 2022 in compliance with COVID-19 Protocols and Regulations.

3.0 PRINCIPLES OF THE PUBLIC INTEREST DISCLOSURE (PROTECTION OF WHISTLE BLOWERS) BILL, 2022

Cabinet considered and approved the Principles of the Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Whistle Blowers) Bill, 2022 as presented by the Minister of Justice, Legal and Parliamentary Affairs.

The nation is being informed that currently, Zimbabwe does not have specific legislation that provides for the protection of individuals that point out ('whistle blow') against illicit activities within organisations they are employed in. The gap is affecting the fight against corruption and exposing the whistle blowers to retaliation. The Bill will promote a Whole-of-Society Approach in the fight against corruption by protecting genuine witnesses who raise issues of public interest.

The Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Whistle Blowers) Bill, 2022 will seek, among other provisions, to provide for:

- a) disclosure of conduct averse to public interest in the public and private sectors;
- b) protection of whistle blowers by prohibiting detrimental treatment of any whistle blower by reason of his or her whistle blowing; and

- c) a framework within which public interest disclosures shall be dealt with.

The enactment of the Public Interest Disclosure (Protection of Whistle Blowers) Bill, 2022 will help safeguard good governance, transparency, justice, accountability and responsiveness as enshrined in the Constitution. Furthermore, the enactment of the Bill will be in line with international best practices as Zimbabwe is a signatory to several Conventions aimed at combating the scourge of corruption within the public and private sector, among these being the SADC Protocol against Corruption; the African Union Convention on Prevention and Combating Corruption, and the United Nation Convention against Corruption.

4.0 VISIT TO ZIMBABWE-BOTSWANA BORDER BY THE INTER-MINISTERIAL COMMITTEE OF MINISTERS TO APPRECIATE THE SITUATION REGARDING CATTLE RUSTLING ALONG THE BORDER WITH BOTSWANA

Cabinet received and noted the Report on the Visit to Mlambapele/Mabolwe Border Post by the Inter-Ministerial Committee of Ministers to Appreciate the Situation Regarding Cattle Rustling along the Border with Botswana, which was presented by the Minister of Home Affairs and Cultural Heritage, Hon. Kazembe Kazembe. The purpose of this visit was to appreciate the problem of cattle rustling which involves movement of stolen cattle along the borders of Zimbabwe, South Africa and Botswana.

The nation is being informed that the Inter-Ministerial Committee is expected to mount joint/simultaneous operations with Botswana, aimed at combating cattle rustling and other illegal activities in that area. It will also intensify community policing programmes through supporting Village/Cluster Anti-Stock Theft Committees and Traditional Leaders.

Government wishes to inform the nation that in response to the challenges, and the need to reduce cattle rustling, six Police bases have been established along the 625km border with Botswana and are now operational. The Ministry of Information Communication Technology, Postal and Courier Services has started scoping the area for the setting up of base stations to enhance communication and surveillance. Furthermore, Cabinet directed the Inter-Ministerial Committee to craft a roadmap for the implementation of the identified initiatives and meet the 30 April, 2022 deadline. The public will be kept abreast of developments in this regard.

5.0 UPDATE ON APPLICATIONS FOR MINING CONCESSIONS BY SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

The Minister of Mines and Mining Development gave an update on applications by Special Interest Groups mainly war veterans who have applied for concessions to undertake mining activities. All the applications were made and approved in terms of the provisions of the Mines and Minerals Act.

6.0 UPDATE ON THE 2021/2022 SUMMER AGRICULTURAL PRODUCTION SEASON AND PREPAREDNESS FOR 2022 WINTER PRODUCTION

The Minister of Lands, Agriculture, Fisheries, Water and Rural Development, Hon. Dr A. J. Masuka, updated Cabinet on the 2021/2022 Summer Agricultural Production Season and Preparedness for 2022 Winter Production.

On marketing of grain, the nation is advised that cumulative grain intake is 1 307 711 metric tonnes comprising 987 394 metric tonnes of maize, 208 509 metric tonnes of wheat, 99 695 metric tonnes of traditional grains and 12 113 metric tonnes of soya bean. Most of the grain delivered to the GMB was paid for. It is noted that due to the erratic rains some areas are experiencing food deficiency. Therefore, Government will increase welfare stocks allocation. Cabinet assures the nation that there is sufficient maize stocks to feed the nation and cater for those who are food insecure.

Pertaining to wheat, Cabinet reports that in order to increase the hectarage under wheat as well as increase the output, tobacco farmers will be roped in to grow the crop. The transition to winter wheat by tobacco farmers is a welcome move and will go a long way in boosting supply of the cereal so that we have sufficient domestic stocks. Cabinet is pleased to report that the country has sufficient fertilizers for winter-wheat farming. Efforts are also being made to guarantee fertiliser supplies for the summer season.

The nation is also informed that tobacco merchants exported 47.6 million kg of tobacco valued at US\$245 million, compared to 28.7 million k.g worth US\$69.6 million exported during the same period in 2021. Cabinet noted that reaping and curing are the main activities and are at advanced stages for the irrigated tobacco crop, while weeding, de-suckering and topping are in progress for the late dry-land tobacco crop. The nation is advised that 30th March is the start of the tobacco marketing season.

7.0 URGENT DEVELOPMENT INITIATIVES FOR BINGA DISTRICT

Cabinet considered and approved the urgent development initiatives for Binga District as presented by the Minister of Local Government and Public Works, Hon. J.G. Moyo.

The nation is advised that following the President's visit and rally at Siyabuwa in Binga there arose the need to implement a variety of development initiatives for the Binga District. These urgent development initiatives include the following: rehabilitation of roads; construction of a Vocational Training Centre; and an Industrial Training Centre refurbishment and setting up of a nursing school at Binga Hospital; and the refurbishment and operationalisation of the mortuary at Binga Hospital. Further initiatives include increasing access to Zimbabwe Television and ZBC radio stations; and fast tracking the capacitation of Tonga Community Stations which have already been licensed. Cabinet advises that the nation will be informed on the roadmap that will be taken once it has been finalised in two weeks' time.

8.0 UPDATE ON THE PREPARATIONS FOR THE 2022 ZIMBABWE INTERNATIONAL TRADE FAIR

The Minister of Industry and Commerce, Hon. Dr. S. I. Nzenza updated Cabinet on the state of preparedness to host the 62nd Edition of the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair in Bulawayo.

The nation is informed that the Zimbabwe International Trade Fair is scheduled to be held from 26th to 30th April, 2022. The theme for this year's premier event is: "***Rethink, Reimagine, and Reinvent Value Chains for Economic Development.***" To date, 386 direct exhibitors have booked 43 444 of the 48 719 sq. meters of exhibition space, which is equivalent to 89.17% of the available space. The official opening ceremony is scheduled for Friday, 29th April 2022 and His Excellency President Uhuru M. Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya will officiate. Another highlight at the ZITF is the Connect Africa Symposium scheduled for 28th April, 2022, where His Excellency President Dr. E.D. Mnangangwa will deliver the Keynote Address. The ZITF International Business Conference will be held on 27th April and the Vice President, Hon. Dr. C.G.D.N. Chiwenga will give the keynote address and officially open the Business Conference. Furthermore, the ZITF Diplomats Forum is scheduled for 28th April, 2022.

In addition to the business and diplomatic exchanges, the ZITF 2022 will have platforms targeted at the youth, for them to discuss topics such as

education and innovation. The aim is to examine how best our future leaders can be empowered and how best they can benefit from current initiatives. These events include the following: the Scholastica Conference scheduled for 26th April and will run under the theme: ***Economic Development through Innovation and Heritage: Promoting Talent and Skill based Education.*** The forum will bring together learners, education experts and career advisors to share information on strategic human capital development in order to create a self-sustaining and enterprising economy. Career guidance sessions and presentations will run parallel. The Innovators' Forum will take place on 26th to 27th April, 2022, under the theme: "***Innovation for Sustainable Value Chains.***" It will incorporate a pitch competition, a hackathon and speaker presentations. The Forum provides a platform for young innovators and entrepreneurs to highlight their innovations, network and exchange knowledge with their peers, with a view to reviving the industry.

I THANK YOU