

UBUNTU NEWSFLASH



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WEEKLY ELECTRONIC NEWSLETTER * THE DEPARTMENT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS & COOPERATION

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CORONA VIRUS (COVID-19)



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PRESIDENTIAL COORDINATING COUNCIL ALIGNS NATIONAL RESPONSE TO COVID-19



On day nine of the 21-day nationwide lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of the Coronavirus, the three spheres of government met to align the country's response the pandemic.

The Presidential Coordinating Council (PCC) meeting, convened by President Cyril Ramaphosa on Saturday, 4 April 2020, assessed progress and challenges on the implementation of the lockdown.

The virtual meeting also kick-started engagements between national and provincial governments towards an economic recovery strategy.

Co-chaired by Deputy President David Mabuza, the PCC is composed of ministers, the premiers of all nine provinces, as well as the South African Local Government Association (SALGA).

At Saturday's meeting, the committee received a report from the National Joint Operational and Intelligence Structure (NatJoins).

Adherence to the national lockdown regulations, ongoing contact tracing, accommodation requirements, including identified quarantine sites, and the roll out of the mass community testing programme, were some of the issues the report touched on.

The meeting heard that 5 400 field workers, by then, had been trained and deployed to various areas across the country to test communities for the virus.

Other field workers are still to undergo training.

In addition, priority districts, as well as 993 wards, have been identified. These comprise the most vulnerable and at risk communities as well as areas with high rates of infection.

Ramping up testing

Provinces are working with the National Health Laboratory Services (NHLS) to identify testing sites, which will include both fixed and mobile test facilities.

Through the COVID-19 Data Management Centre, government is receiving early warning of potential clusters of infections and thus deploying pre-emptive targeted testing in identified areas.

It further receives daily estimates on infections, assesses local healthcare capacity and the efficacy of the lockdown.

Medical supplies

The PCC further considered the security of supply of essential medical supplies, including regulations that have been established to restrict exports of essential medical goods.

The Presidency said government was ramping up efforts to build up local manufacturing capacity. It is also assessing the capacity of state-owned entities to produce essential supplies.

The PCC acknowledged the work done by the Department of Water and Sanitation to increase access to water through the delivery of water tanks and tankers across the country.

By 4 April, more than 6 000 tanks and 723 tankers were delivered to various communities.

It is expected that this programme will be significantly escalated in the coming days and weeks, and further maintained when the pandemic has passed.

Delivering their provincial reports, the premiers stressed the need for greater coordination and communication around the National State of Disaster regulations across all levels of government.

The premiers reaffirmed the regulations, as gazetted as binding across all provinces.

President Ramaphosa commended national, provincial and local government on their efforts to stop the spread of the virus.

The President thanked them for their concerted measures to provide relief to the most vulnerable communities, informal sector workers and indigent households during this period.

While appreciating the hardship and inconvenience the national lockdown has caused, the President reasserted that it had been countries that had imposed restrictions on movement and gatherings, that had managed to flatten the curve of the virus.

The President urged government and society at large to build on the tremendous impetus provided by the need to respond to the Coronavirus pandemic to rethink how government, businesses and communities function and related to each other.

“The Coronavirus changes everything,” President Ramaphosa said.

The PCC will be meeting frequently to ensure alignment on the national response to the Coronavirus pandemic.

– Source: [SAnews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)

AU BUREAU CALLS FOR INTERNATIONAL SUPPORT AMID COVID-19

With an urgent need for medical supplies and equipment to fight the COVID-19 pandemic, African Union (AU) member states have called for international cooperation and support.



“Lifesaving supplies, including PPEs (personal protective equipment) masks, gowns, and ventilators and other support devices are urgently needed,” said the AU Bureau in a statement on Friday, 3 April 2020.

The continental body made the call on Friday in a second teleconference meeting convened by AU Chairperson President Cyril Ramaphosa.

President Abdel Fattah al Sisi of the Arab Republic of Egypt, President Ibrahim Keita of the Republic of Mali, President Uhuru Kenyatta of the Republic of Kenya and President Felix Tshisekedi of the Democratic Republic of Congo, as members of the Bureau, participated in the teleconference meeting.

The meeting was held to discuss the African response to the COVID-19 (Coronavirus) pandemic.

A call to lift sanctions

The heads of state also strongly called for the immediate lifting of all economic sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe and Sudan, to allow them to adequately respond to the pandemic and save lives.

“The African Union has repeatedly called for the lifting of these punitive sanctions, which the Bureau consider intolerable and inhumane in the present context,” said the Bureau in a statement.

President Paul Kagame of the Republic of Rwanda, Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed of the Federal Republic of Ethiopia, President Macky Sall of the Republic of Senegal and President Emmerson Mnangagwa of the Republic of Zimbabwe also participated in the teleconference.

Rising infection rates

The Bureau also received presentations from World Health Organisation (WHO) Director General, Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus; Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) Director, Dr John Nkengasong; and President Emmanuel Macron of France.

Dr Nkengasong gave a continental update, which highlighted rapidly increasing COVID-19 infection rates across the continent.

Dr Ghebreyesus emphasised the importance of taking action now to test and to guarantee equitable access to test kits, masks, PPEs as well as vaccines and therapeutics as soon as they become available.

Response Fund

The meeting highlighted the unprecedented threat that COVID-19 presented to the health of African citizens and to the continent’s hard-won developmental and economic gains.

They also recognised the imperative to establish humanitarian and trade corridors in a spirit of African solidarity and integration.

The heads of state noted with satisfaction progress made in operationalising the AU COVID-19 Response Fund.

The fund was established on 26 March 2020, with members pledging a sum of US\$12.5 million and an additional US\$4.5million to the Africa CDC.

At the meeting, heads of state agreed to establish continental Ministerial Coordination Committees on Health, Finance and Transport, in order to support the comprehensive continental strategy.

They underscored the need for a comprehensive and coordinated continental approach and the need to speak with one voice on Africa’s priorities.

Impact of the virus

Cognisant of the devastating socio-economic and political impact of the pandemic on African countries, the Bureau reiterated the need for rapid and concrete support as pledged by the G20 and other international partners.

These include the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF).

“It is critical that these institutions review their current disbursement policies to display flexibility and speed, including raising the availability of IMF Special Drawing Rights (SDRs),” said the Bureau.



Stimulus package, Sahel region

The Bureau also echoed the call for a comprehensive stimulus package for Africa. The package, it said, should include, deferred payments, the immediate suspension of interest payments on Africa's external public and private debt.

This it said, would create fiscal space for COVID-19 response measures.

Meanwhile, the body commended the rapid action coordinated by Ethiopian Prime Minister Abiy Ahmed and the Jack Ma Foundation in mobilising and distributing, with the support of the World Food Programme and Africa CDC, the distribution of over one million diagnostic tests.

Over one million diagnostic tests, six million masks and 600 000 PPE items were delivered to all AU member states in less than a week.

The meeting noted that the Sahel region needed special attention, in light of terrorist activity.

The Bureau pledged its solidarity with the countries in this region, which have to fight the twin scourge of terrorism and COVID-19.

– Source: [SAnews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)

PRESIDENT RAMAPHOSA PAYS TRIBUTE TO GENL CONSTAND VILJOEN

President Cyril Ramaphosa has expressed condolences at the passing of General Constand Viljoen, founding leader of the Freedom Front Plus and former Chief of the (then) South African Defence Force. Aged 86, Gen Viljoen passed away on Friday, 3 April 2020, on his farm in Mpumalanga.



The President offered his sincere condolences to Mrs Risti Viljoen and the immediate and extended family of the late general, as well as his friends and political associates.

President Ramaphosa said Gen Viljoen would be remembered for influencing conservative movements into abandoning plans for military resistance to the democratic transition.

President Ramaphosa said: "Gen Viljoen's principal contribution was his success in demobilising conservative resistance to the transition in our country at a critical point in our history. He risked alienation by his community and longstanding supporters by mobilising conservative groupings to participate in the political and constitutional negotiations that yielded our democratic dispensation.

"His transition from a military commander to a voice in our democratic Parliament illustrated the inclusive, diverse and tolerant character of our constitutional dispensation and body politic."

DIRCO WELCOMES REPATRIATED SA CITIZENS



At least 16 South Africans, who were stranded in Dubai and Doha, respectively, have been successfully repatriated.

The Department of International Relations and Cooperation (DIRCO) said the group arrived in South Africa on Thursday, 2 April 2020. Their return followed the relaxation of the State of Disaster regulations to allow South Africans stranded abroad to travel back home.

The group is currently under quarantine, as per the regulations.

South Africa is currently under a 21-day lockdown in a bid to curtail the spread of the Coronavirus.

With more countries requesting to repatriate their citizens from South Africa, the department will be using the opportunity to bring back more South Africans using the chartered flights.

By 4 April, the country's missions and the Command Centre in Pretoria had registered a total of 2 313 South Africans stranded abroad due to the outbreak of COVID-19.

The outbreak has led to many countries closing their borders.

Of the 2 313 citizens, 726 are students, 600 are workers, 492 are tourists, while a further 495 have not disclosed their designation.

In line with Minister Naledi Pandor's instructions, the department is prioritising those who are stuck at airports, students who have been asked to vacate their residences, the elderly and the sick.

"The department wishes to assure all the South African citizens stranded abroad that it empathises with their plight and is doing whatever it can to assist them to be safe, as comfortable as possible and to travel back to South Africa," said DIRCO.

– Source: [SAnews.gov.za](https://www.sanews.gov.za)

SAA REPATRIATES BRAZILIAN NATIONALS

South African Airways (SAA) concluded an agreement with the Brazilian Government to charter a flight to return Brazilian nationals back to their home country on Monday, 6 April 2020.



SOUTH AFRICAN AIRWAYS

“SAA has concluded an agreement with the Brazilian Government to charter a SAA flight to return Brazilian nationals to São Paulo on 6 April,” said the national carrier in a tweet on Monday.

The national carrier expressed pride at being of service in the repatriation.

The repatriation of Brazilian nationals came as South Africa entered day 11 of the national 21-day lockdown aimed at curbing the spread of Coronavirus (COVID-19).

On 22 March, the South African Government took the decision to declare a national lockdown, starting at midnight on 26 March to curb the spread of COVID-19.

In response to the pandemic, SAA has suspended all domestic, regional and international flights.

Engaging embassies

In a statement last week, SAA’s Business Rescue Practitioners (BRPs) said subsequent to the lockdown, representatives of several governments had engaged with the joint BRPs of SAA to consider having SAA provide the safe passage of their citizens to their respective home countries.

These engagements have required the consideration, approval and support of the South African Government to implement.

Following the engagements with various embassies and in consultation with the relevant government departments, SAA has agreed to provide repatriation charter flights to various international destinations.

The first of these chartered flights was for the repatriation of German citizens to their home country last week.

“The BRPs have confirmed that negotiations are ongoing with other governments for the repatriation of their citizens. SAA will operate the charter services, subject to the health and safety provisions contained in the regulations and other relevant provisions during the lockdown,” said SAA’s BRPs last week.

– Source: SAnews.gov.za

CONSERVATION EFFORTS LEAD TO RISE IN BLACK RHINO NUMBERS



The International Union for Conservation of Nature (IUCN) reports that black rhino numbers have risen from about 2 000 in the 1990s to the current level of 5 600.

A conservation project started nearly two decades ago to create new black rhino populations is paying off.

The World Wildlife Fund's (WWF) Black Rhino Range Expansion Project (BRREP) was started in 2003 by far-sighted conservationists who saw the need to create new black rhino populations on large areas of good habitat.

It is now one of the reasons that the IUCN could recently report that black rhino numbers have risen from about 2 500 in the 1990s to the present 5 600.

The project is run in partnership with Ezemvelo KZN Wildlife, Eastern Cape Parks and Tourism Agency and various private and community landowners. It creates new populations by moving founders (of up to 25 black rhino at a time) on to properties large enough to maintain a significant population.

Often this involves neighbouring properties removing internal fences to create larger, unfettered reserves. There are 13 BRREP-created populations to date, on a total of more than 300 000 hectares of land.

"It's great to see nearly two decades of hard work on behalf of black rhino paying off," said project head, Dr Jacques Flamand.

"Our sites now have 256 black rhino on them. And they have been busy. We had seven calves, born on four different sites, over the Christmas period. We've had a year of good rain so far in most of our reserves. We hope this leads to even more calves next year."

Last year, half of BRREP's sites reached the 5% annual growth target set by provincial conservation authorities. Black rhino numbers in the game reserves from which they were removed to create those populations are also increasing consistently.

This is because consistently removing a certain number of animals from a population that is near carrying capacity helps to stimulate growth.

Project coordinator, Ursina Rusch, who compiles data on all the different populations so that the best decisions can be made for the management of the species, explained: "That's the art of ecological management. You have to remove not too many and not too few to get it right."

Dr Flamand said this achievement had been a team effort.

"The creation of partnerships between landowners and conservation bodies was the key to making it happen. That involved many dedicated people. We rely very much on passionate people who have the resources to invest in protecting rhinos. Otherwise, no one would keep them.

"We still need much more land if the impetus is to be maintained. A successful increase in black rhino numbers means that there are more calves produced and those need places to be put into as they grow up."

But WWF said this did not mean that black rhino were out of the woods.

Although numbers are increasing, growth of most populations is slow in most regions, and poaching further slows that growth rate, even though white rhino take the brunt of poaching.

There are still only 5 600 black rhino on the African continent and WWF states that without concerted conservation efforts, the current growth

would not have occurred.

"But there is still much to do, and much of it involves BRREP finding suitable large blocks of land for black rhino, and owners of that land prepared to devote it to black rhino conservation – a risky and costly endeavour," said Dr Flamand.

"This will be an ongoing challenge, particularly as wildlife tourism has been hard hit by the global Coronavirus pandemic."

– Source: www.ewn.co.za

“ZOG” – THE SOUTH AFRICAN ANIMATION – WON THE INTERNATIONAL EMMY FOR BEST KIDS ANIMATION

“Zog”, co-directed by South African Daniel Snaddon (“Stick Man”) and two-time Oscar nominee Max Lang (“The Gruffalo” and “Room On The Broom”), won the International Emmy for Best Kids Animation recently.



The 27-minute short film was animated in Cape Town by Triggerfish and produced by Magic Light Pictures.

Zog has already won the Children’s Programme Award from the Royal Television Society; Best Animation at the Shanghai International TV Festival; and the Audience Award for ages three to six at the New York International Children’s Film Festival. The short was also nominated for a Kidscreen Award for Best One-off, Special or TV Movie; and Best Special Production and Best Storyboarding at the Annie Awards in 2020.

The adorable short film is based on Julia Donaldson and Axel Scheffler’s much-loved 2010 picture book, which sold over 1.5 million copies and won the Galaxy National Children’s Book of the Year Award in the United Kingdom. Zog is the keenest but clumsiest pupil in his class at Dragon School, where he longs to win a gold star as he learns how to fly, roar and breathe fire. He keeps meeting a kindly young girl who patches up his bumps and bruises, but can she help him with his trickiest school assignment yet: capturing a princess?

Zog premiered on BBC One at Christmas 2018 to five-star reviews, 8.8m viewers and the highest share (37%) of any programme across Christmas week on British television. In South Africa, the short premiered at The Cape Town International Animation Festival in March 2019 and on Showmax in August.

Zog follows a string of acclaimed BBC Christmas adaptations produced by Magic Light Pictures. Zog is the fourth animated at Triggerfish, following the multi-award-winning Donaldson-Scheffler adaptations *Stick Man* (2015) and *The Highway Rat* (2017) as well as the Oscar-nominated Roald Dahl adaptation *Revolting Rhymes* (2016), which also won the International Emmy in 2018. A fifth, *The Snail and The Whale*, is now also streaming on Showmax, and recently won Best Voice Performance for Sally Hawkins at the 2020 British Animation Awards.

Magic Light Pictures has previously made the celebrated Donaldson-Scheffler adaptations: the Oscar-nominated *The Gruffalo* (2009) and *Room On The Broom* (2012) and Annecy winner *The Gruffalo's Child* (2011). All eight family specials are now streaming on Showmax.

– Source: www.goodthingsguy.com



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