

**MEDIA STATEMENT BY LIMPOPO PREMIER HON. CHUPU STANLEY MATHABATHA ON THE PROVINCIAL COVID VACCINE ROLL OUT PLAN HELD AT ATRIUM, MOWANENG BUILDING, POLOKWANE**

**04<sup>th</sup> Febuary 2021**

The Honourable MEC of Health in Limpopo, Dr. Phophi Ramathuba;

Members of the Executive Council logged on to this engagement via Zoom;

Friends from all the Media Houses;

Distinguished people of Limpopo;

Ladies and Gentlemen.

**Inhlikanhi! Ndi Masiari! Thobela! Lotshani! Goeie Middag!  
Good Afternoon!**

Programme Director

Please allow me to start by expressing my utmost pleasure emanating from the recent heavy rains we are experiencing in our province and throughout our country.

When it was initially announced on the 20<sup>th</sup> January 2021, we were warned against a severe Tropical storm called Eloise. Weather bureau experts cautioned us to guard against widespread damage to properties, roads, bridges and flooding.

Little did we know that in the case of Limpopo, Eloise was among others bringing us much needed relief through heavy rainfalls? We are told by those responsible that, currently all our major dams in the province have significantly improved their water levels, to above 55%.

As a water scare province, we welcome these heavy down pours and we wish that heavens can remain open and continue to shower us with these blessing of water.

We are however on high alert to monitor any eventuality that may arise as direct consequence of these heavy rains. To date, a considerable number of cases of destruction to property due these rains have been reported and they have been attended to.

On the same wavelength, we express our deepest condolences to all the families who have lost their loved ones as the aftermath of Eloise is felt. So far, statistics at our disposal show that in Capricorn District Municipality, two deaths cases have been reported, while in Mopani District, only one death case has been reported.

That is why our provincial disaster management team, under the guidance of MEC for COGHSTA, Baiskop Makamu, is on standby to assist should any eventuality arise.

### **Programme Director**

Today marks exactly four days since the arrival of the 1 000 000 Covid-19 Vaccine doses in our country. For this great achievement, Limpopo will like to thank President Cyril Ramaphosa and his leadership collective.

As stated, the distribution of the vaccine will go a long way in protecting the population against the SARS-Cov-2 virus, by interrupting transmission through achievement of the herd immunity.

We are gathered here today guided by our objectives, which among others seeks to:

- Reduce the morbidity and mortality caused by the Covid-19 virus through prioritization of high risk and vulnerable population;
- Ensure readiness of the health service delivery platform for vaccination;
- Ensure safe and efficiency delivery of vaccine to target population in the public and private sector;
- And to monitor and evaluate the Covid-19 vaccination program.

### **Programme Director**

Having gathered here today, we are pleased that Limpopo has successfully established governance, co-ordination and planning structures which are tasked with the Covid-19 vaccination process. Those structures are:

- Provincial Executive Management;
- Vaccine Technical Working Workgroup;
- And the Covid-19 District Vaccination Task Team.

As you are well aware, the vaccine rollout strategy will be coordinated by the national Department of Health, with provincial department of Health and the private health sector.

As such the Limpopo Department of Health will coordinate the process through deployment of two committees. They are:

- The Covid-19 Surge Committee, mainly responsible for oversight and coordination of the Covid-19 response;
- And Vaccine Technical Working Group, which will report to the Covid-19 Surge Committee.

The Vaccine Technical Working Group comprises of representatives from various units at the Provincial Department of Health.

### **Programme Director**

It is already common knowledge that the vaccine will not be immediately available for everyone, therefore, a prioritization system will be applied.

In our case, the first priority will be given to the following categorize:

- Those considered to be essential for societal functioning;

- Those considered to be most at risk of infection and serious outcomes, age above 60 years, with comorbid conditions;
- Those living in overcrowded settings;
- And those who are most at risk of transmitting SARS Cov-2 to others.

As such, Limpopo will introduce the vaccine through a phased approach.

- Phase 1, vaccination will be to all the front line workers in both public and private health sector;
- Phase 2, to all the high risk groups including, persons in congregate settings, person who are 60 years and older, persons who are above 18 years with co-morbidities, other essential workers including teachers, police, security, funeral parlour, retail food, banking sector, local government, officials of government, miners, etc;
- Phase 3, will be an open vaccination for all the people in Limpopo.

It is therefore important to note that, currently, pregnant women and children under the age of 18 years will be excluded from

vaccination, since this group has not yet being studied for vaccine efficacy.

### **The People of Limpopo**

Currently, we have been allocated 44 526 Covid-19 vaccine doses for our provincial department of Health staff members. To date 39 sites are ready to administer the vaccination process throughout the province.

And as part of enrolment for the vaccine, all health workers will complete an online registration. This system will also be part of the consent procedures and risk assessment. Through all the systems put in place, Limpopo has the capacity to vaccinate all the phase 1 population within a period of two to three weeks.

### **Programme Director**

Please allow me to join President Cyril Ramaphosa when he said that no person or individual will be forced to be vaccinated. However, on our part, we are very conscious towards Vaccine Safety Monitoring.

Although the vaccine has been through phase 3 trial, we are ready to ensure that close monitoring and reporting of adverse event is critical, especially during phase 1.

We will use both active and passive methods for surveillance of the vaccine safety. Our infrastructure, systems and controls here in Limpopo are ready for the rollout of Covid-19 vaccine. That means that we are very ready.

### **MEC Dr Ramathuba and the people of Limpopo**

As I have said during our previous engagement which took place on the 14<sup>th</sup> January 2020, please be informed that the Covid-19 Vaccine is safe.

This vaccine is currently one of the most trusted solutions as we march towards social and economic recovery. Coronavirus has so far destroyed economies and livelihoods.

This invisible virus has caused more deaths in our communities, resulted in joblessness and negatively impacted all in our livelihoods.



Therefore, the vaccine, among others, is seen by all countries of the world as a positive measure towards the fight against coronavirus.

The sooner we dispel the myth by the prophets of doom who are opposed to the use of the vaccine, the better. I am making a clarion call to all of you never to be deterred and appreciate the vaccination process.

In that spirit, Limpopo supports the sustenance of Alert Level 3, with the relaxation of most regulations under the Disaster Management Act. We are saying to our people, we are not out of the woods yet.

Therefore, we must please continue to avoid overcrowded areas like funerals, soccer tournaments, weddings, shebeens and taverns and other mass gatherings. Those remains 'super spreader events'.

Let us all continue to wear our face masks, practice social distancing, continue washing our hands with water and soap

and sanitizing. Our lives are more important than entertainment. Once a life is lost it can never be regained.

Our message remains the same. As the late Moses Kotane has said, open and close quote, the future of our country is in your hands and, it depends on what you make use of it.

This government will continue doing everything in its power to contribute towards a lasting solution to our challenges and you, our people must also play your part.

We are overcoming the peak of the second wave together and together, we can equally avoid the third wave of infections. And that can only be achieved through behavioural change and the acceptance that all the rights as enshrined by our Constitution, has limitations.

### **Programme Director**

In conclusion, please allow me to wish President Cyril Ramaphosa strength in his quest to find more Covid-19 vaccine for our country.

As Limpopo, we are ready to ensure that we contribute immensely towards the presidential target of reaching population immunity.

We believe that when more people are immunized, life will go back to normalcy and shuttered lives will be restored. Once more our heartfelt condolences goes to all the families, relatives and friends, who have lost their loved ones due to covid-19 pandemic.

Like Ngugi wa Thiong'o teaches us, let us all work towards decolonising our minds.

God Bless South Africa! Morena Boloka Setshaba sa Gesu!

**I Thank You!**