



**FEDERAL REPUBLIC OF NIGERIA**

**STATEMENT OF THE**

**HONOURABLE MINISTER OF HEALTH,**

**DR. E. OSAGIE EHANIRE, MD, FWACS**

**AT THE VIRTUAL SESSION**

**OF THE**

**73<sup>RD</sup> WORLD HEALTH ASSEMBLY**

**MAY 18, 2020**

## **Protocol**

### **Your Excellencies**

#### **President of the 73<sup>rd</sup> WHA**

#### **DG WHO**

#### **Delegates of the WHA**

#### **Distinguished Participants**

I bring greetings and best wishes from the Government and people of the Federal Republic of Nigeria.

2. I congratulate you, Mr. President and other officials, on your elections into office to steer the proceedings of the 73<sup>rd</sup> session of the World Health Assembly. I also wish to express appreciation of the achievements of the World Health Organization, under the able and inspiring leadership of Director-General, Dr. Tedros Ghebreyesus, whose visionary agenda aims to reform global public health, in the fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.

3. Mr. President, Nigeria has keenly noted and followed advisories of WHO since January 2020 and had put a preparedness and

response plan in place against the Coronavirus disease, well before its importation into our country. We had commenced screening with thermal scanners and collection of health and travel history information from arriving passengers at all Points of Entry, while strengthening our epidemic control and response measures. Our first COVID-19 case was identified on 27<sup>th</sup> of February 2020 in a passenger who arrived by air in the night of 24<sup>th</sup> to 25<sup>th</sup> February 2020. Through our strategy of high alert at Air Points of Entry, index of suspicion, prompt testing, contact tracing, isolating and treating, we could identify one contact and contain virus spread at that initial phase. Multiple imports were to overwhelm our response system.

4. The Ministry of Health had set up an Inter-ministerial Committee on COVID-19, later replaced with the President's multi-sectoral Task Force on covid-19, established on March 9, 2020 and chaired by the Secretary to Government of the Federation, to coordinate and oversee the multi-sectoral effort to contain spread and mitigate impact of the pandemic. The Task Force is to: i. provide policy direction and guidance, outbreak control priorities and continuous support to National Emergency Operation Centre, Ministries and Government Agencies involved in response activities; and ii) ensure their coordination towards a single set of national strategic objectives.

5. To drive pandemic control measures, Government instituted lockdowns in the 2 States hosting our main international airports, predictably the main gateways for COVID-19 importation to Nigeria: Lagos with the adjacent Ogun State and Abuja, Federal Capital Territory for 5 weeks. The lockdown has since been relaxed to allow essential economic activities, but the populous state of Kano was added, to slow down the spread of the virus.

6. Nigeria applied targeted testing strategy to optimize use of scarce commodities, but has since scaled up capacity and coverage, as well as surveillance, risk communication and Isolation and case management capacity in various states. We have also increased health worker training, to curtail Infection in the line of duty.

7. As at 11p.m. Sunday, 17<sup>th</sup> May, 2020, Nigeria's confirmed cases of the virus stood at 5,959 out of the total 33,970 samples tested; active cases were 4,183 with 1,594 recoveries and 182 fatalities.

8. Non pharmaceutical protective measures taken so far include closure of all air, land and sea points of entry and of domestic air and rail travel, prohibition of non-essential inter-state travel, and a national dusk to dawn curfew. Many states instituted additional local

restrictions. Persons arriving Nigeria from abroad undergo supervised mandatory 14 day quarantine.

9. Use of cloth masks has been made mandatory for all persons when outside their homes, in addition to other social measures such as distancing, respiratory and hand hygiene, while medical grade masks are now reserved for healthcare workers. Personal Protective Equipment, diagnostic devices and kits, ventilators, oxygen generators have been supplied to healthcare facilities. Healthcare workers have been assured hazard bonuses and insurance.

10. The COVID-19 pandemic has elicited new level of collaboration between the private and public sectors and among nations and agencies, which will hopefully help develop and transform our health sector, in bringing together players in Industry, Banking, Business and philanthropy.

11. United Nations Agencies in Nigeria created the innovative Basket Fund, bringing Bi, and Multilateral donors to pool resources for procurement, to be managed by Project Management Board.

12. The President also set up the national Economic Sustainability committee to develop a comprehensive plan to respond to socio-economic disruptions and dislocations caused by the COVID-19

pandemic and chart a way into the post COVID-19 era. The Central Bank of Nigeria set up a stimulus package to assist micro, small and medium scale enterprises to recover, while other social palliatives have been put in place to alleviate impact on the poor and vulnerable. Nigeria's two-step approach is to protect the lives of citizens and residents and preserve their livelihoods.

13. Finally, It will be vitally important to sustain the delivery of essential health services including immunization, malaria prevention and treatment, Family Planning services, treatment of malnutrition and maternal Health services during the COVID-19 pandemic. It is pleasing to mention that Nigeria has stayed polio free since the last case was reported in August 2016, critical for sustaining polio eradication from the African continent. We shall strive to maintain the status.

14. I thank the WHO and UN Agencies, partners, countries and organizations, who extended a hand of solidarity to Nigeria during this period.

15. Thank you for your attention.

May 18, 2020

