

## **Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) response to Covid-19 (coronavirus) as at 6 April 2020**

After the announcement on 18 March 2020 of a number of preliminary measures, the President of the DRC Félix-Antoine Tshisekedi Tshilombo announced on 24 March 2020 a state of emergency for a period of 30 days and an ordinance came into force setting out the measures taken by the Government.

The officials, heads of institutions of the central power and the provinces and decentralised territorial entities are responsible in their respective areas for the implementation of the ordinance. A Governmental Covid-19 Response Unit has also been created with administrative and technical autonomy operating under the authority of the President to inform the choices of the Executive in the management of the health crisis and advise on the measures taken during the emergency situation.

On 26 March 2020, the Governor of Kinshasa announced a total confinement of Kinshasa from 28 March 2020 for a period of 3 weeks, however this confinement was then cancelled shortly. On 2 April 2020, the Governor of Kinshasa announced that the Gombe commune in Kinshasa, being the epicenter of the pandemic in Kinshasa, is to be put on confinement for a period of 14 days from 6 April 2020. In addition, as at 6 April 2020 the cities of Butembo, Beni and Goma in the Nord-Kivu province have been put in isolation.

As at 6 April 2020, there were 180 reported cases of contaminations of Covid-19 in DRC, including 18 deaths and 9 recoveries.

A summary of the measures announced by the DRC authorities is set out below.

### **Ordinance dated 24 March 2020**

- **State of Emergency**

- A state of health emergency is declared throughout the national territory for a period of 30 days starting on the 24 March 2020 (which can be terminated earlier by a decision of the President if the circumstances warrant it).

- **International travels**

- All borders of the DRC are closed to any person, except for cargo ships and other means of freight transport.
- All flights from countries at risk and transit countries are suspended from 20 March 2020, and the travel by any passenger from countries at risk bound for the DRC is to be postponed.
- All passengers on an aircraft bound for the DRC must fill in an information sheet, and submit to hand washing and temperature testing on arrival at national borders.

- **Confinement measures**

- All travel between Kinshasa and the provinces is prohibited in order to allow the confinement of Kinshasa (being the current centre of the pandemic in DRC). To do this, each person in charge of institutions or services is responsible for taking minimum service measures to compensate for the confinement of other State agents to their homes. This implies a ban on flights between Kinshasa and the provinces, with the exception of planes carrying cargo and whose crews will be subject to a strict usage control on departure and arrival.
- All gatherings, meetings and celebrations of more than 20 people on public roads and places outside the family home are prohibited, the population is requested to stay at home and to travel only when strictly necessary for professional, family or health needs.

- All migratory movements by public transport, buses, trucks and other vehicles to and from Kinshasa are prohibited. Barriers must be erected by the Governors and crews must be submitted to rigorous Covid-19 controls.
- All river passenger transport between Kinshasa and the provinces are prohibited, with the exception of vessels and boats carrying goods with crews and conveyors.
- Schools, universities, official private higher institutions and all establishments receiving the public as well as meeting places are to be closed with effect from 19 March 2020 for a period of 4 weeks.
- The opening of discos, bars, cafés, terraces and restaurants is prohibited as well as the organisation of mourning in rooms, homes or in public, the mortal remains having to be taken directly from the morgue to the place of burial and with a limited number of accompanying persons.
- All religious services as well as all sports activities in stadiums are suspended from 19 March 2020 for a period of 30 days.
- **Sanitary measures**
  - Heads and officials of all institutions, both national and provincial, are required to make adequate health arrangements to protect their members and staff and the general population from contamination or spread of contamination of Covid-19.
  - All public health services are required to provide public education and to ensure the effectiveness of the measures to be implemented.
  - In order to prevent the spread of the epidemic and to ensure public health, measures are authorised, under the coordination of the Covid-19 Response Unit, including measures with respect to:
    - the systematic health control of all persons entering the national territory and of those leaving the cities, especially the capital city, to the other provinces of the country;
    - the maritime, river, lake and land entry points of the national territory are equipped with the same surveillance system in order to strengthen the control of passengers coming from abroad;
    - quarantine for a maximum of 14 days of persons presenting symptoms of Covid-19 and likely to be affected by Covid-19; and
    - the placement and maintenance in isolation, in their home or any other suitable accommodation, of persons affected by Covid-19;

***Workplace Measures announced on 23 March 2020 by the Minister of Employment, Labour and Social Security***

Employers are to ensure that:

- their employees avoid crowding in the workplace, while respecting a social distance of at least 1 metre;
- the hygiene instructions recommended by the World Health Organisation and applicable in the workplace are strictly observed, in collaboration with the Trade Union Delegation;
- priority is given, as far as possible, to working from home in order to protect the productivity of companies; and

- efficient communication about the Covid-19 pandemic takes place within companies as well as a permanent dialogue with the Trade Union Delegation throughout the period of the pandemic.

***Measures announced on 24 March 2020 by the DRC Central Bank***

- The continued provision of liquidity to banks to enable them to easily carry out their banking services.
- The reduction of the reference interest rate from 9.0% to 7.5% in order to reduce the cost of credit.
- The establishment of a special counter for refinancing with a maturity of 3 to 24 months, in order to increase the banks resources and enable them to increase the financing of the economy under more flexible financial conditions.
- The reduction of the coefficient of the compulsory reserve on short term deposits in national currency from 2 to 0%, in order to free up liquidity for the benefit of banks.
- The postponement until January 2022 of the entry into force of the provisions relating to the increase in the minimum capital level of banks, credit unions and microfinance institutions, in order to reduce the constraint on these financial institutions.
- The freezing of loan classification rules to allow financial institutions to suspend the application of penalties for late payment of outstanding loans during the crisis period.
- A request that credit institutions and microfinance institutions restructure outstanding loans in favour of the sectors directly affected by the crisis in a prudent manner (including rescheduling of maturities, moratoria and/or grace periods, etc.).
- The implementation of a number of measures with respect to the hygiene of cash in circulation and an encouragement on the Congolese people to use of electronic payment systems with consequential measures to be implemented to aid in the implementation of this, such as disinfecting banknotes, increasing limits of electronic payments and abolishing fees on electronic payments.

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