



OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL

STATEMENT BY HIS EXCELLENCY THE GOVERNOR-GENERAL, SIR DAVID VUNAGI, GCMG KStJ

My Fellow Solomon Islanders,

Novel Coronavirus ("COVID-19") first emerged in China in 2019. The spread of the Virus continued into 2020 and on 30th January, 2020, the World Health Organisation ("WHO") declared COVID-19 a Public Health Emergency of International Concern ("the PHEIC Declaration").

The PHEIC Declaration triggered the Solomon Islands Government to introduce Regulations under the Immigration Act 2012 known as the Immigration (Amendment) Regulation 2020 which was intended to restrict entry of persons into Solomon Islands.

However, as you are well aware, the spread of COVID-19 was not contained and COVID-19 continued to spread to other countries and this resulted in the increase of mortality rates caused by COVID-19 worldwide.

In light of the uncontrolled global spread outlined above, WHO on 11th March, 2020 declared COVID-19 "a pandemic". Since that declaration, WHO has now confirmed 195 Countries have now contracted the infection including our close neighbours Australia, New Zealand, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. In addition to the above, New Caledonia, French Polynesia (Tahiti) and Guam have also recorded confirmed cases of COVID-19.

Currently, the statistics on COVID-19 are 422,566 cases with 18,887 deaths worldwide.

A Coronavirus Oversight Committee ("the OSC") was established by Cabinet and was responsible for the monitoring and providing advice to the Solomon Islands Government. The OSC included amongst others, Permanent Secretaries from the Ministries of Health and Medical Services, Office of the Prime Minister & Cabinet and Ministry of Commerce, Immigration, Labour and Industries.

Threat to Solomon Islands

The Government recognizes that the importation of the COVID-19 could be catastrophic for Solomon Islands considering the limited health resources we currently have and that Solomon Islands will only be safe if the COVID-19 does not enter Solomon Islands.

An assessment of the threat posed by COVID-19 has been conducted by the Government and the threat assessment has recommended that the risks associated with the continued spread of COVID-19 is matter of national security. As such, the Government needs to respond now to the rising security threat that COVID-19 poses.

It is in light of the above and in accordance with 16(2) of the Constitution, hereby proclaim and declare that State of Public Emergency now exist in Solomon Islands.

The period of public emergency is the period where the state of public emergency now exist in Solomon Islands by way of a Proclamation and shall cease to have effect on the expiration of a period of seven days commencing with the day on which the declaration was made. However, if Parliament by way of a resolution with the support of two thirds of Members thereof decided to extend that period then it will be extended for a period of 4 months as provided for under section 16 (5) of the Constitution. I understand that Parliament will be reconvened for this very purpose.

The Proclamation will now trigger the Emergency Powers Act and accordingly, I will be making the relevant regulations that will contain the powers exercisable during the Emergency Period. Upon the publication in the Gazette of the Regulations made under the Emergency Powers Act, the Prime Minister will make the relevant orders. Further statement as to the implication of these orders will be made in due course by the Prime Minister.

May I take this opportunity to reiterate the measures stated by the Hon. Prime Minister as follows:

- (a) Wash your hands regularly with soap or alcohol based hand rub;
- (b) When you cough or sneeze, do it into your flexed elbow or use a tissue and dispose of the tissue immediately into a closed bin and wash your hands.
Do not cough/sneeze into your hands;
- (c) Clean your house, office or stores. Disinfect surfaces, tables or work desks;
- (d) Avoid crowded spaces and practice social distancing of 1.5m apart from the other person;
- (e) No handshakes;
- (f) Avoid touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

May God Bless us all and May God Bless Solomon Islands from Shore to Shore.

