



**EQUATORIAL
GUINEA**
MANAGING THE
IMPACTS OF
COVID-19

EQUATORIAL GUINEA

COVID-19 Outbreak

31 March 2020

The Equatorial Guinea Government has been active in adopting measures to face the outbreak of the novel coronavirus (the COVID-19) in Equatorial Guinea, including those taken in 12 March 2020 suspending international flights as from 15 March 2020 and keeping the population well informed (particularly by the Ministry of Health) of all COVID-19 symptoms and of what health measures should be followed during the pandemic.

After a first case being diagnosed on 13 March 2020, on 15 March 2020 additional preventive measures were enacted by way of an Order of the Presidency of the Government. These preventive measures were decreed for a thirty (30)-day extendable term and included inter alia the (i) suspension of academic activities, sports' competitions and religious ceremonies; (ii) prohibition of weddings, christenings and wakes with a grand concentration of people, and (iii) prohibition of gatherings of more than 10 people (except in certain circumstances in bars and restaurants if sanitary measures are taken), of public transportation by bus and of recreational events. All airlines were also requested to provide a listing of all passengers that entered the Country from 1 February 2020 onwards. The Government also decreed the mandatory quarantine of all those travelling from countries with more than 500 cases of COVID-19.

On 16 and 17 March 2020, respectively, the Parliament and Senate announced the suspension of their activities.

The National Bank (the BANGE) announced that it would continue working to ensure access to funds. For the aforementioned purpose, the BANGE implemented a number of guidelines aimed at preventing the spread of the virus in its agencies (few people inside, sanitary measures for workers, etc.).

On 17 March 2020, the existence of three COVID-19 cases was announced by the President of the Republic in H.E.'s address to the Nation. The President alerted inter alia to the vulnerability of the Country to the pandemic, which the President qualified as justifying a declaration of State of Emergency. The President highlighted the need to act with civility, solidarity and responsibility, and the population was asked to fully observe the Government and Health Authorities' instructions. Otherwise, they would be deemed as disobeying an order, with it endangering all the Country's population.

On 20 March 2020, the President of the Republic enacted Decree 31/2020 creating the "Coronavirus-19 Emergency National Fund", counting with a Government's five billion (5,000,000,000) CFA francs (approximately US\$ 8,500,000) contribution. The population in general was

asked to make voluntary contributions and the BANGE (inter alia) opened a bank account to support the Government's efforts in the fight against the coronavirus.

After recording a total of nine confirmed cases of COVID-19 (all tests having been conducted by the Baney Lab, which is certified by the World Health Organization and is a lab of reference in Central Africa), on 23 March 2020 the Equatorial Guinea Prime Minister issued an Order strengthening the preventive measures then in force. This Order entered into force on 23 March 2020 and the measures may be summarized as follows:

- National and foreign citizens that entered into the Country from 1 March 2020 onwards and that were not put in quarantine must contact the Health Authorities so that they may take all the appropriated measures to ensure public health;
- National and foreign citizens are to remain at their homes, unless they need to go to their workplaces (public or private), or visit health centres, pharmacies, supermarkets or purchase other essential goods; when permitted, one should leave home alone; private vehicles (that may only circulate for the aforementioned purposes) may however carry two passengers;
- Certain vehicles may be prevented by the Home Ministry from circulating in certain roads for public health or security reasons;
- Celebrations and public gatherings of more than ten (10) people at the same place are recommended to be suspended during the pandemic;
- Bars that do not serve prepared food are to close; all leisure and recreational places (including fairs, discos, pubs, casinos, parks and pools) are to close as well; restaurants and canteens may however continue open provided that they do not serve more than ten (10) people at the same time;
- Public transportation within the city and between cities in large and mini buses is prohibited, taxis cannot carry more than one (1) passenger and company buses used to transport people cannot have more than two (2) passengers;
- State Public and Private Administrative Services continue to work but any suspected case of COVID-19 must be immediately reported to the Novel Coronavirus Surveillance Technical Committee;
- Citizens with symptoms must liaise with the Health Authorities through dedicated phone numbers and all citizens must follow the orientations of the Novel Coronavirus Surveillance Technical Committee;
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- Everyone is asked to do their fullest to comply with the efforts of the Government and Health Ministry; and
- Compliance with the preventive measures is overseen by (inter alia) Public Order Forces and (if applicable) by neighbourhood communities.

On 25 March 2020, the Ministry of Public Administration exempted all those belonging to groups more vulnerable to COVID-19, pregnant women, those above 50 years old and those with chronic illnesses (such as high blood pressure and diabetes), from work.

Although these are the measures currently in place in Equatorial Guinea, since their adoption the number of positive cases of COVID-19 has increased. In view of this, the Council of Ministers has been discussing a draft Decree declaring State of Emergency and on 30 March 2020 the President of the Republic had a meeting with members of the Government to discuss widening even further the measures to contain the COVID-19 in the Country. Some of the measures discussed include the (i) implementation, within 72 hours, of an isolation of all districts in the mainland (deemed the most vulnerable location in a Country divided between the Island of Bioko, where the capital city of Malabo is located, and the mainland) during an extendable 14-day period; (ii) reduction of the prices of power and fuel; (iii) provision of essential goods and health materials to the Annobon and Corisco Islands; (iv) ensure that traders do not increase exponentially the price of essential goods. Therefore, other measures will most probably be put in place on 31 March 2020.

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