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OFFICE OF THE VICE-CHANCELLOR

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STATEMENT ON THE CORONAVIRUS DISEASE (COVID-19) EPIDEMIC

We are all aware that on 31st December 2019, The Peoples Republic of China notified the World Health Organization (WHO) of an outbreak of a pneumonia-causing illness. The illness was later confirmed to be due to a new strain of Coronavirus, and the disease referred to as Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19). On 30th January 2020, WHO declared this outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern.

By 7th March 2020, data from WHO indicated that globally, the number of confirmed cases were over 101,828 and over 3,483 had died. As of 7th March 2020, the outbreak had spread to more than 80 countries worldwide including Egypt, Algeria, Nigeria, Tunisia, Senegal, South Africa, Cameroon, Morocco and Togo in Africa.

The most recent update issued by the Uganda Minister of Health on 7th March 2020 indicated that there is no confirmed case of COVID-19 in Uganda.

The Uganda Ministry of Health has issued several regular situation updates, regular Press Statements, recommendations and guidance to prevent the importation of COVID-19 to Uganda. Among others, these include;

1. A Fact Sheet on what Ugandans need to know about the New Coronavirus Disease
2. A Poster on how COVID-19 is spread, the signs and symptoms of COVID-19 and how to prevent getting infected by COVID-19
3. A Travel Advisory on COVID-19 for Ugandans intending to travel, reside in and or return from COVID-19 affected countries
4. Press Statements on Updates about Uganda's enhanced measures to prevent importation of Novel Coronavirus Disease (COVID-19)
5. Advisory on Postponement of International Meetings and Conferences
6. Guidance on Mass Gatherings

These resources reflect the Guidance and Recommendations from the World Health Organization (WHO) and you can refer to them for further information and guidance;

1. What you need to know about COVID-19
<https://www.cdc.gov/coronavirus/2019-ncov/downloads/2019-ncov-factsheet.pdf>
2. WHO recommendations for international traffic in relation to COVID-19 Outbreak
https://www.who.int/ith/2019-nCoV_advice_for_international_traffic_rev/en/
3. WHO guidance on Planning and conducting Mass Gathering in the context of COVID-19
<https://www.who.int/publications-detail/key-planning-recommendations-for-mass-gatherings-in-the-context-of-the-current-covid-19-outbreak>
4. Making workplaces COVID-19 Ready
<https://www.who.int/docs/default-source/coronaviruse/getting-workplace-ready-for-covid-19.pdf>
5. Critical Preparedness, Readiness and Response actions for COVID-19
<https://www.who.int/emergencies/diseases/novel-coronavirus-2019/technical-guidance/critical-preparedness-readiness-and-response-actions-for-covid-19>

The Uganda Ministry of Health continues to emphasize the following;

1. Avoid hand-shaking and hugging
2. Avoid close contact with people who are visibly sick with flu-like symptoms (fever, cough, sneeze)
3. When sick with flu-like symptoms avoid going to public places, offices and public gatherings. Remain at home to avoid infecting others.
4. You do not need to wear medical masks if you do not have respiratory symptoms such as cough, sneezing or running nose
5. Don't take self-medication such as antibiotics
6. Do not spit in public. Find a secluded place like toilets or pit latrines in which to spit
7. Delay travel to countries that currently have many patients with COVID-19. If you must travel, please follow the protective measures
8. Avoid travel if you have flu-like symptoms
9. Do not spread false rumors and misinformation. Always verify information from the Ministry of Health to avoid spreading false rumors which may cause unnecessary anxiety.
10. Report any suspected cases to the nearest health facility or call the toll-free line on 0800-203-033 and 0800-100-066 or Mr. Atek Kagirita 0782909153, Dr. Allan Muruta-0772460297.

Makerere University is characterized by several factors that create a unique context within which the guidance and recommendations on how to prevent COVID-19 must be implemented. Among others, these include;

1. Having a community of International Students, some from countries where COVID-19 has been confirmed

2. Many teaching staff who frequently travel to and from several countries where COVID-19 has been confirmed
3. Many visitors from countries where COVID-19 has been confirmed
4. Frequent local and international conferences and workshops
5. Congestion in Lecture Rooms, Libraries, Dining halls and Halls of Residence
6. Frequent Mass Gatherings

To fast-track the implementation of the Ministry of Health Guidance and Recommendations on preventing COVID-19 in the University, the University has instituted a committee on COVID-19 Preparedness. The responsibilities of the committee will include but not limited to;

1. Contextualization and implementation of Ministry of Health guidance and recommendations on preventing COVID-19
2. Representing the University in Ministry level deliberations on COVID-19 Preparedness
3. Development and implementation of the Makerere University COVID-19 Preparedness Strategy
4. Issuing regular updates to students and staff on the global, regional and national COVID-19 situation
5. Intensifying Risk Communication on COVID-19 in the University
6. Creation of Provisional Isolation facilities (and standby ambulance services) at the Makerere University Hospital for any identified COVID-19 suspect
7. Adherence to the Ministry of Health travel Advisory and Guidance on planning and conducting Mass Gatherings
8. Identifying the need for and advising the University on the requirement for more hand-washing and disinfection facilities in the University

Management will keep all stakeholders updated about any new developments and decisions about the COVID-19 epidemic.

Yours sincerely,

Prof. Barnabas Nawangwe
VICE CHANCELLOR

