

**Prime Minister (Caretaker) of the Republic of Vanuatu**  
**Public statement regarding the Coronavirus Epidemic Outbreak**  
**7<sup>th</sup> February 2020**

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I as Caretaker Prime Minister of the Republic of Vanuatu, wish to make the following press statement regarding the global outbreak of the Coronavirus in China and what the National Task Force led by the Ministry of Health is jointly working with boarder control agencies to prevent its spread to Vanuatu;

1. As of today Friday 7<sup>th</sup> February 2020, Vanuatu has no confirm case of the Coronavirus. I understand there are rumors about suspected cases of Coronavirus circulating but this information is false. I want to assure the public that should there be any confirmed case; the public will be inform accordingly. I want to encourage every citizen of the Country to remain calm and comply to health messages by the World Health Organization and the Ministry of health about personal protection and hygiene practices such as covering the mouth and nose when coughing or sneezing and regular hand washing to prevent the spread of Coronavirus in case of any future outbreak. For Facebook (FB) viewers I wish to encourage everyone to visit the Health promotion Face Book page, which will be the official information source about the Coronavirus.
2. The government through the National Task Force and Border Control Authorities have stepped up border control measures in line with the Coronavirus outbreak situation outside of China. As of last week, ***all passengers transiting China or departing China to come to Vanuatu MUST self-quarantine themselves for 14 days outside of china before coming to Vanuatu. At the end of the 14 days, they must obtain a medical clearance from a recognized certified Doctor that they are free from Flue like symptoms before they can be allowed into the country.*** I have to make this clear that this travel advisory will apply to every nationals including Ni Vanuatu and Vanuatu government officials transiting China regardless of their status. This is necessary as China is now confirmed as the epicenter of the Coronavirus and WHO information indicated that human-to-human transmission can be prevented. At this stage, official trips to China are restricted for Ni Vanuatu until the threat of the Coronavirus is over.

3. Furthermore, travelers into Vanuatu through ports of entry by boat or plane who have been identified for medical surveillance requirement are requested to cooperate with health and boarder authorities. As of today the Director of Customs have devolve extra authority under his power to eight Public heath staffs to join the boarder control staffs to enter inbound vessels and aircrafts for inspections.
4. As a measure for government to step up its effort to prepare for any future Coronavirus outbreak, the Health Cluster was been activated to ensure training of health workers and appropriate health resources are in place particularly at Hospital and health Centre levels. I confirm that the caretaker government recognize the threat of the coronavirus as a major public health concern and will continue to ensure that the national task force is mandated with the necessary resources to carry out its duties, and if necessary formal communication to health partners to utilize additional financial and technical resources will be declared.
5. In regards to our nationals and especially Vanuatu students living in China, the Ministry of Foreign affairs, Health and Education have held talks with the parents of the students this week and the National Task Force through the Ministry of Foreign Affairs will continue to monitor their health situation. I confirm that as of today, none of our students has contracted the Coronavirus. Formal communications with Vanuatu Embassy in China will continue for their safety.
6. The Caretaker government of Vanuatu welcome and congratulate the World Health Organization for information regarding the Coronavirus and it's technical and financial assistance to countries affected by the global outbreak. Vanuatu will continue to work closely with WHO in country office to facilitate technical advice about the Coronavirus since declaring the outbreak as a "*Global Public Health emergency*" last week. As of today, the caretaker government will ensure Border Control Authorities will put in place stricter measures to prevent the import of the Coronavirus with the assistance of the surveillance team as tasked by the National Task force and ensure the health sector is prepared to the expected level to receive and manage any possible outbreak of the virus.

7. Finally, I wish to thank the Coronavirus national taskforce team for their time and commitment to ensure that Vanuatu is prepared in case there is introduction of the Coronavirus in the coming weeks or months, but as a Christian nation, I urge every church leaders and citizens of Vanuatu to pray for protection and guidance during this global public health emergency and wish all citizens good health.

Thank you