GOVERNMENT OF MALAWI
PRESS STATEMENT

COVID-19 SITUATION UPDATE AS OF 6TH JANUARY 2021

In the past 24 hours, Malawi has registered 227 new COVID-19 cases, 34 new recoveries, and no new deaths. Of the new cases, 212 are locally transmitted infections: 80 from Blantyre, 46 from Lilongwe, 22 from Zomba, 19 from Mzimba North, 14 from Salima, 11 from Thyolo, six from Kasungu (all health care workers), five from Mulanje (3 are health care workers), three from Dowa, two from Mwanza (0ne health care workers) and Nkhotakota, and one each from Mangochi and Ntchisi districts while 15 cases are imported infections: seven from Lilongwe, four from Blantyre, two Mwanza and one each from Rumphi and Zomba districts.

Cumulatively, Malawi has recorded 7,337 cases including 199 deaths. Of these cases, 1,577 are imported infections and 5,760 are locally transmitted. Cumulatively, 5,787 cases have now recovered, 134 were lost to follow-up, and 76 are still being investigated to ascertain their outcome. This brings the total number of active cases to 1,141. **Of the active cases, 69 cases are currently admitted: 28 in Blantyre at Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital, 33 in Lilongwe at Kamuzu Central Hospital and Bwaila Hospital, two in Mzuzu at Mzuzu Central Hospital, two in Balaka at Balaka District Hospital, two in Zomba at Zomba Central Hospital, one each in Thyolo at Malamulo Adventist Hospital and in Nkhotakota at Nkhotakota District Hospital.** The average age of the cases is 36.7 years, the youngest case being aged 1 month, the oldest being 98 years old and 68.3% are male. On testing, in the past 24 hours, 1,387 COVID-19 tests were conducted, 55 of the new test were through SARS-COV-2 Antigen Rapid Diagnostic test while the rest were through RT-PCR and cumulatively, 90,035 tests, have been conducted in the country so far.

The speed at which the disease is spreading is alarming and today we recorded the highest number of cases (227) in this wave and we are still experiencing local transmission of the disease coupled with a number of imported cases. Sadly, the number of active cases has surpassed 1,000 mark within the past three weeks and the total number of those admitted is at a record high at 68. These figures might be under reported as there might be a lot of active cases within the communities. We have also observed an increase in the number of people infected within various institutions and this indicates the laxity of adherence to the preventive measures at personal and institutional level. Much as we have imported cases influencing the status, community transmission is also rising especially in Blantyre and Lilongwe – the disease hotspot districts. This is a big challenge at a time when many factors put us at high risk of

contracting the disease. There are reports of mutated COVID-19 virus affecting many countries including some African countries such as South Africa and Zambia. The mutated corona virus is said to be spreading faster than the primary variant. This is putting everyone at high risk of contracting this virus especially that we have socioeconomic travels with these countries. Correspondingly, as the number of cases is rising so is the number of admissions as well as deaths. To avoid these devastating outcomes, we need to adhere to all preventive measures of COVID-19 as taught by Ministry of Health.

The chances of one recovering from COVID-19 increases when the disease is identified as early as possible hence the need for prompt health seeking behaviour. I would like to encourage the public to promptly inform the health authorities by calling toll-free number 54747 (Airtel) or 929 (TNM) whenever one is experiencing COVID-19 like symptoms such as fever, cough, flu, shortness of breath, loss of taste or smell and tiredness. This will help us to identify the disease in early stages so that appropriate care can be given immediately.

Watch your distance! Wash your hands! Wear your mask! Seek for care early upon development of symptoms of COVID-19.

Dr John Phuka

Co-Chairperson – Presidential Taskforce