



REMARKS BY THE CHAIRMAN ON THE APPROVAL OF THE PRESIDENT FOR THE 8th
INTERIM REPORT OF THE PRESIDENTIAL TASK FORCE (PTF)
ON COVID-19 FOR THURSDAY, 15TH OCTOBER, 2020

Today is Thursday, 15th October, 2020 and I welcome you to the National Briefing by the Presidential Task Force.

2. During the last briefing on Monday 12th October, 2020 I informed you that the PTF had compiled all its observations and findings and would in due course present the 8th Interim Report and recommendations to Mr. President, to enable the National Response proceed into the next phase. The 8th Interim Report, focused on the primary objective of consolidating the gains recorded in the National Response over a period of six weeks which ended on 13th October, 2020.

3. Nigerians would recall that the Presidential Task Force on COVID-19, announced the current measures as approved by Mr. President, on 3rd September, 2020 for a period of four weeks. Due to other exigencies including the celebration of the diamond anniversary of Nigeria's Independence, the phase had to be extended.

4. For the purposes of emphasis and reminder, the PTF continues to build on progress made, navigate challenges encountered, and remained on course to achieve:

- ✓ slowing transmission;
- ✓ preserving lives and livelihood; and
- ✓ addressing disruptions caused by the pandemic in all sectors of the economy and our lives.

5. Let me at this point avail us snippets of the global situation. As you are all aware, all around the globe, millions continue to be affected by the devastating effect of COVID-19. Many countries in different continents have however gradually commenced reopening and adapting to the reality of the pandemic lasting longer than originally expected. Schools are reopening with strict guidelines; airlines have commenced flights with enforced advisories and other aspects of social engagement continue to be gradually reincorporated.

6. The response remains buoyed by the ever-increasing global collaboration between, among nations and with international organisations. In country, public and private sectors have also teamed up to expand the scope of their partnership especially in resource mobilization, risk communication and the race to find a cure. I am pleased to add that the PTF has observed and learnt great lessons from these jurisdictions and has similarly taken measures to reopen our economy albeit in a safe and cautious manner.

7. Much as the world is coming to terms with the new normal, emerging statistics indicate that we still have to be cautious, vigilant by taking responsibility. As at the **14th of October, 2020**, the summary of the global situation for COVID-19 stood as follows:

- i. Cumulative case count had exceeded 38 million;
- ii. The United States, India, Brazil, and Russia were recording over a million cases;
- iii. On the African continent, South Africa continues to record the highest case count, with Morocco, Egypt, Ethiopia and Nigeria following in that order;
- iv. The reopening of airspaces and other areas of society continued to increase the risk of subsequent outbreaks;
- v. Countries in Europe have been experiencing a high level of second wave of infections after reopening their economies; and
- vi. Some countries are reintroducing stricter measures to control the spread and are confronted by the difficult choices of introducing short national lockdowns or limiting local restrictions.

8. By way of comparison over a period of one month (**between 13th September and 13th October, 2020**) the following statistics will show you the changes around the world as depicted in the tables on the screen (**Refer to the Screen**):

Cases						
	Cumulative: 13 September		Cumulative: 13 October		Increase	
	Cases	% Global	Cases	% Global	Absolute	Percent
Global	28,637,952		37,888,384		9,250,432	32%
WHO African Region	1,116,321	3.9%	1,237,088	3.3%	120,767	11%
Nigeria	56,256	0.2%	60,655	0.2%	4,399	8%

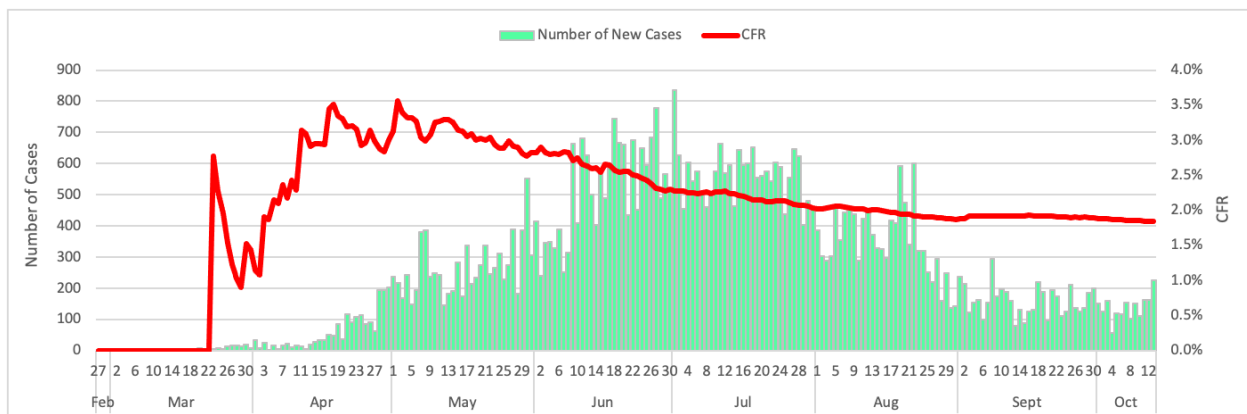
Deaths

	Deaths	% Global	Deaths	% Global		
Global	917,417		1,081,868		164,451	18%
WHO African Region	23,916	2.6%	27,540	2.5%	3,624	15%
Nigeria	1,082	0.1%	1,116	0.1%	34	3%

9. In Nigeria, the Presidential Task Force (PTF) continues to rely on data, research, science and experience of other nations to inform decisions at all stages. Our National response to COVID-19 remains targeted at achieving the purposes of epidemic control through reduced transmission and minimizing mortality among vulnerable parts of the population.

10. Till date, Nigeria has sustained the substantial successes earlier recorded. Although statistics show that the pandemic is not slowing down globally, the number of recorded cases in Nigeria have remained between 100-200 daily for the last 4 weeks with a progressive fall in the case fatality rate to 1.9%. The reduction in the test positivity ratio to less than 5% further corroborates the belief that the epidemic curve is flattening, despite the unsatisfactory testing rate in the country attributable to general apathy among the populace. The graph on the screen illustrates the Case Fatality Ratio

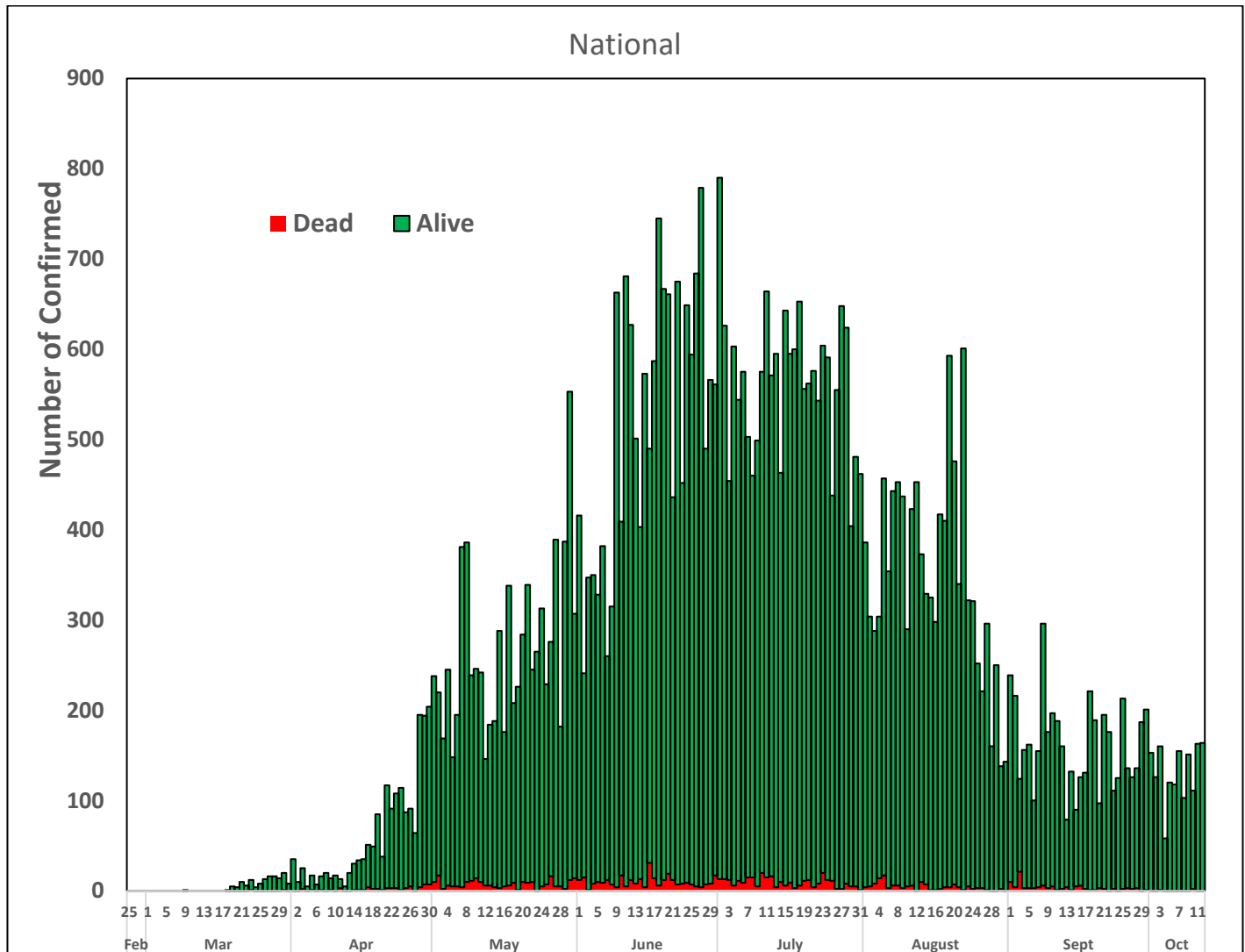
Figure 1: Cumulative Case Fatality Ratio



11. As at **October 14**, 2020 the vital information generated in Nigeria include the following:
- i. No of confirmed cases of COVID-19: 60,834;
 - ii. Total active cases: 7,575;

- iii. No of fatalities:1,116 deaths;
- iv. Number of recovered cases: 52,143;
- v. Cumulative number of samples tested: 567,857;
- vi. Number of laboratories established 69 with at least one in each State;
- vii. States that have achieved the testing target of 1% of population: FCT and Lagos closely followed by three states that have crossed 50%;
- viii. Twenty-six (26) States yet to reach 25% of testing target; and
- ix. Presently, there is a molecular laboratory for COVID-19 testing in every state of the country and the additional funding provided by the Federal Government, should help to scale up testing for COVID-19;
- x. The PTF has concluded arrangements to test additional 100,000 at the various NYSC orientation camps nationwide, when they re-open soon;
- xi. The PTF has also concluded arrangements to execute the National Testing Week as part of the arrangements to ramp up testing; and
- xii. Over twenty-seven thousand international passengers have arrived Nigeria since the resumption of international flights

Figure 2: Daily Epidemic Curve of Confirmed Cases (WK9 – WK42)



12. It is however important to draw the attention of Nigerians to the following significant areas of concern, notwithstanding the seemingly improving numbers:

- ✓ Low level of sample collection by States;
- ✓ Increasing apathy, scepticism and disbelief;
- ✓ Very low compliance with non-pharmaceutical guidelines by Nigerians; and
- ✓ Low risk perception leading to low sample collection rate and decreasing testing.

13. If we must avoid a second wave and continue to flatten the curve, it is imperative for us to jointly address these concerns and the PTF appeals strongly for collaboration and for all hands to be on deck.

14. Over the last six weeks, the PTF carried out activities to boost our case management capacity, both in hospitals and at home. This has resulted in increased risk communications and community engagement activities, alongside collaboration with most state governments. The reopening of the international airspace has been largely successful with most passengers following the laid down regulations and adhering to testing requirements. We have not seen a spike of cases since the reopening of the airspace.

15. The PTF however noted the huge challenge posed to our national response by States as a result of poor engagement which manifests strongly in the form of low level of sample collection across the country. As at date, only the FCT and Lagos have achieved the target of testing one percent of its population followed by three States that have crossed 50% (Plateau, Gombe & Rivers) Twenty-Six others are yet to measure up to 25%. This is considered a serious problem which is further compounded by the increasing general apathy and disbelief about the risk of COVID-19 in Nigeria.

16. After a very careful review of the national response, **the PTF believes that while recent numbers point to a likely flattening of the curve consistent with emerging epidemic control, Nigeria is not yet ready for a full-reopening of the economy.** It has accordingly recommended and Mr President has APPROVED the following:

- (i) that Nigeria further relaxes the restrictions in this third phase of the response, while maintaining key limitations to curb the risk of a spike in cases. The major changes proposed by the PTF are as follows:
 - ✓ Gradual and safe re-opening of schools and NYSC camps;
 - ✓ Re-commencement of sporting leagues, in particular all outdoor activities such as football;
 - ✓ Sustaining the midnight-4am curfew on movement nationwide; and
 - ✓ Removal of the limitation on civil servants allowed to come to work.

17. Other measures approved by Mr. President include:
 - (i) Maintaining the third Phase of the National Response to COVID-19 for a period of four weeks with effect from 00.01am on Monday, 19th October, 2020 in line with amendments to address economic, socio-political and health considerations reflected in the table above;
 - (ii) Sustain engagement with States and Local Governments to improve community sensitisation and sample collection;
 - (iii) Continue to monitor the impact of school re-opening and the commencement of international travel and enforcing compliance with the protocols set out for the safe resumption of these activities; and
 - (iv) Maintaining the already established non-pharmaceutical interventions nationwide in order to flatten the curve.
18. The National Coordinator will elaborate on the details of measures approved for the next phase, during this briefing.
19. Before I close this remark, let me join the whole world to mark the Global Handwashing Day and to emphasize that its more important than ever to keep your paws clean in this fight against the COVID-19 pandemic.
20. I now invite the National Coordinator to elaborate on the next phase guidelines.
21. I thank you all for listening.