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My fellow South Africans,

Exactly half a year has passed since we declared a national state of disaster in response to the coronavirus pandemic.

In that time, more than 15,000 South Africans have lost their lives to the disease and more than 650,000 have been confirmed as infected.

Our economy and our society have suffered great devastation.

We have endured a fierce and destructive storm.

But, by standing together, by remaining resolute, we have withstood it.

Two months ago, at the height of the storm, we were recording around 12,000 new cases a day.

Now, we are on average recording less than 2,000 cases a day.

We now have a recovery rate of 89%.

Even as restrictions have eased over the last month with our move to alert level 2, there has been a gradual, but steady, decline in new infections, hospitalisations and deaths.

Demand for hospital beds, ventilators, oxygen and other essential medical requirements has also reduced steadily.

We have succeeded in overcoming the worst phase of this epidemic while protecting the capacity of our health system.

I wish to applaud you, the people of South Africa, for this achievement and for the thousands of lives that have been saved through your collective actions.

This Organisation in Geneva

, as well as the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

Although we have made remarkable progress, a number of our people are still getting infected and some are losing their lives.

By any measure, we are still in the midst of a deadly epidemic.

Our greatest challenge now and our most important task

Contact tracing is an important preventative measure to protect yourself and your close family and friends.

We will be

We will be allowing travel into and out of South Africa for business, leisure and other travel with effect from 1 October 2020.

This is subject to various containment and mitigation measures:

- Travel may be restricted to and from certain countries that have high infection rates. A list of countries will be published based on the latest scientific data.
- Travellers will only be able to use one of the land border posts that have remained operational during the lockdown or one of the three main airports: King Shaka, OR Tambo and Cape Town International Airport.
- On arrival, travellers will need to present a negative COVID-

Because there are several remaining restrictions that can only be enacted through disaster regulations, we have already extended the national state of disaster by a month to 15 October 2020.

The move to alert level 1 removes many of the remaining restrictions on economic activity, although it may be some time before it is safe for all sectors to return to full operation.

Global and domestic demand and supply of goods and services for some sectors will remain low for the foreseeable future, regardless of the lifting of restrictions.

It is therefore vital that we move with urgency to rebuild our economy, restore growth and create jobs.

Following several weeks of engagement, the social partners at NEDLAC have made tremendous progress on an ambitious social compact for economic recovery.

This represents a historic milestone for our country, demonstrating what can be achieved when we unite to confront an urgent crisis.

Cabinet will build on this emerging common ground to finalise the country's economic reconstruction and recovery plan in the coming weeks.

The reconstruction and recovery plan that will be finalised will build on the R500 billion economic and social relief package we announced in April, which has provided vital support for households, companies and workers at a time of dire need.

Through the special COVID-19 grants and the top-up of existing grants, well over R30 billion in additional support has already been provided directly to more than 16 million people from poor households.

More than 800,000 companies have benefited through the UIF wage support scheme and through the grants and loans provided by various government departments and public entities.

More than 4 million workers have received R42 billion in wage support, helping to protect these jobs even while companies were not able to operate.

This support has touched the lives of millions of South Africans, and has made a real difference to those in greatest need.

The UIF benefit has been extended until the end of the national state of disaster to ensure that those workers and companies whose income remains at risk can continue to be supported.

In addition to those businesses that have received direct support, many more companies have benefited from tax relief measures worth in the region of R70 billion.

And millions of South Africans have benefited from the historic reduction in interest rates.

Adjustments have been made to the Loan Guarantee Scheme to make it easier for companies of any size to access credit at low interest rates, with repayments delayed for as much as twelve months.

We encourage all companies who have faced a disruption of their earnings to seek support from this scheme while the economy recovers.

At the beginning of the pandemic we appealed to South Africans to demonstrate their solidarity and patriotism by supporting government's effort in dealing with the pandemic.

We established the Solidarity Fund, which has received some 300,000 donations from almost 15,000 individuals and nearly 2,500 companies.

The donations came from ordinary people and workers, religious organisations, political parties, non-governmental organisations, trusts and foundations.

Through its work, the Solidarity Fund has demonstrated the power of social partnership and cooperation.

Since it was established, it has raised over R3.1 billion in donations from companies, foundations and individuals.

It has, to date, allocated R2.4 billion to support key areas of our national coronavirus response.

These include the purchase of testing equipment, medical supplies and personal protective equipment and the local manufacture of ventilators. It extends to food relief for vulnerable households, vouchers for subsistence farmers, care for survivors of gender-based violence and a national COVID awareness campaign.

Fellow South Africans,

Violence against women and children has continued unabated during the period of the pandemic.

We are determined to continue with our resolve to deal with the scourge of gender-based violence and femicide.

Based on the latest data, we have identified 30 hotspots around the country where this problem is most rife.

As we move to the next alert level, we are increasing and improving support services for survivors of gender-based violence, particularly in the identified hotspots.

In just over a week from now, South Africans will celebrate Heritage Day under conditions that will be better in many ways from what we have experienced over the last six months.

I urge everyone to use this public holiday as family time, to reflect on the difficult journey we have all travelled, to remember those who have lost their lives, and to quietly rejoice in the remarkable and diverse heritage of our nation.

And there can be no better celebration of our South African-ness than joining the global phenomenon that is the !"#%&' (& dance challenge.

So I urge all of you to take up this challenge on Heritage Day and show the world what we are capable of.

Just as we have acted together to defeat this virus, we must roll up our sleeves and get to work rebuilding our economy.

We have a mammoth task ahead of us.

It will take the combined effort of each and every South African to restore our nation to prosperity and development.

This is now the task of our generation and our work starts today.

We have overcome doubt and cynicism to confront the worst public health threat in living memory.

We have shown what South Africans are capable of when we join forces.