

NIGERIA: THE FEDERAL GOVERNMENT PLACES TRAVEL RESTRICTION ON 13 COUNTRIES DUE TO THE CORONA VIRUS OUTBREAK IN THE COUNTRY.

Introduction

On March 11, 2020, the World Health Organization ("WHO") declared the Coronavirus a "Pandemic". The 2019 - 2020 Coronavirus (also known as "COVID-19") was first identified in Wuhan Hubei, China in December 2019. According to recent statistics, more than 202,000 cases of COVID-19 have been reported in over 160 countries and territories, with major outbreaks in China, Europe, United States, Iran, South Korea, and United Kingdom. So far, more than 8,000 people have died from complications from COVID-19 while over 82,000 people have recovered from the virus.

On February 25, 2019, Nigeria confirmed its first case of COVID-19, following the outbreak of COVID-19 in China and other countries worldwide. The Federal Government of Nigeria as a precautionary step, set up a Coronavirus Preparedness Group comprising of key government agencies such as the Federal Ministry of Health and the Nigeria Centre for Disease Control to mitigate the impact of the virus if it eventually spreads to the country. As at March 19, 2020, there have been more than 10 cases of confirmed COVID-19 recorded in Nigeria and the World Health Organization has listed Nigeria among other 13 African countries identified as high-risk for the spread of the virus.

Restricted Countries

On March 18 2020, The Federal Government of Nigeria issued a travel ban on 13 countries with high cases of COVID-19. The restricted countries include:

1. China
2. France
3. Germany
4. Iran
5. Italy
6. Japan
7. Netherland
8. Norway
9. South Korea
10. Spain
11. Switzerland
12. United Kingdom
13. United States

The travel restrictions are part of Nigeria's efforts to avoid the pitfalls resulting from the late response of countries who have now reported high cases of the pandemic which they are now battling to control. According to the Secretary to the Government of the Federation and Chairman of the Presidential Task Force "PTF" COVID-19 Boss Mustapha, the restrictions takes effect from Saturday, March 21, 2020, and is expected to last for four weeks. Other Categories Affected

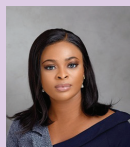
The Visa on Arrival policy has also been suspended for the thirteen countries listed above to prevent the spread of the virus and the government has temporarily suspended all visas issued to the nationals from these countries. The government also advised Nigerians arriving from these countries to self-quarantine for a period of 14 days. It is unclear if this restriction will also apply with Nigerians or permeant residence of Nigeria returning from the restricted countries.

This proactive step was taken by the federal government as a precaution against the spread of coronavirus in the country so as to ensure that socio-economic activities are not grounded to a halt (as witnessed in countries like Italy and Spain) and also to ensure that the medical staff are not overburdened given the country's low patient to doctor ratio.

Conclusion

We believe this new restriction will help keep the virus outbreak under control and curtail the spread of the virus in the country. We also suggest that Nigerian citizens in their own interest should cancel, or postpone all non- essential travels abroad, including business and vacation trips, especially to countries affected by the disease. We are still unclear as to how long the directive will be implemented but the Secretary to the Government of the Federation was emphatic that these bans will remain in force until further notice.

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