



**STATEMENT BY PRESIDENT CYRIL RAMAPHOSA (IN PROGRESS)
IN THE NATIONAL EFFORT TO CONTAIN THE COVID-19 PANDEMIC**

**UNION BUILDINGS, TSHANE
22 MARCH 2022**

My Fellow South Africans,

It is almost exactly two years since I stood before you to announce that South Africa would be entering a nation-wide lockdown to contain the spread of the COVID-19 virus.

This was a drastic and unprecedented measure.

But it slowed the spread of the virus so that our health facilities – and indeed our society – had time to prepare for the anticipated surge in infections.

Since then, we have had to adjust our response as the pandemic has changed, as infections have risen and fallen, and as our health facilities have come under pressure.

For two years, our lives have been shaped by this pandemic.

South Africa has had more than 3.7 million cases and has recorded nearly 100,000 COVID-19 deaths.

The pandemic has changed the way we work, travel, worship and socialise.

It has shattered many livelihoods and devastated our economy, leading to the closure of many businesses and the loss of some two million jobs.

Yet it has also shown South Africans to be a caring and compassionate people, coming to each other's assistance at the hour of the greatest need.

When we were called upon to observe restrictions on movement, gatherings and various activities, as South Africans, we did so, knowing that this was for the sake of our health and lives and the good of the country.

Over the past two years, we have taken unprecedented actions to strengthen our health system.

We hired more people to deal with the pandemic, built more hospital and laboratory capacity and ensured that COVID-patients are well cared for in our hospitals.

We are now at a watershed moment.

We are now ready to enter a new phase in our management of the pandemic.