



CORONAVIRUS: WHO sends 43 experts to South Africa

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NIGERIA: -

The World Health Organisation on Wednesday says it will be deploying 43 experts from various fields to support the COVID-19 outbreak response management in South Africa.

WHO said that the first team of experts from WHO, who will assist South Africa in its fight against coronavirus, is set to arrive in the country on Wednesday [today].

A total of 43 senior experts from across the globe, including renowned specialists Dr David Heymann, a seasoned infectious disease epidemiologist and public health expert and Dr Mike Ryan, are among the team that will assist the country to refine its efforts against the pandemic.

The WHO stated that these deployments have emanated from continued discussions between the Minister of Health, Hon Dr Zweli Mkhize, and WHO global and regional leadership. With South Africa now among the top five of the world's most affected countries, it is critical to strengthen its COVID-19 response.

“At this time when the COVID-19 epidemic in South Africa is spreading rapidly, it is important that we work together to intensify our fight against the virus,” said Dr Owen Kaluwa, WHO Representative for South Africa. “For this reason,

WHO is ramping up support to complement national and provincial efforts to scale-up the response. Our collective efforts are necessary to identify cases, isolate and provide care, follow up contacts and fully implement physical distancing and other key public health measures. In this way, we will minimize the spread and impact of COVID19.”

The organisation also stated that the WHO will be primarily responsible for funding the international surge team with South Africa largely being responsible for providing administrative resources for smooth initiation and integration of the partnership.

The surge team will be jointly led by Dr Matshidiso Moeti, WHO Regional Director for Africa and Dr Michael Ryan, Executive Director of the WHO Health Emergencies Programme. They will work virtually from Brazzaville, Republic of the Congo and Geneva, Switzerland respectively to support the experts on the ground.

The first 17 experts will complete a period of quarantine and initiation before being deployed within the department and across various provinces.

“These provinces have been identified as the ones needing the most urgent support where the first team can make the most impact. As the remaining experts are deployed by WHO, all provinces in the country will benefit from their presence,” said Dr Sandile Buthelezi, the Director-General of Health.

The surge team is expected to contribute to national efforts in key response areas including surveillance and streamlining of epidemiological systems and WHO global COVID-19 response guidelines, improved case management, leading to a reduced hospital burden and increased community buy-in resulting in greater compliance to public health measures.

