

# Swaziland National Association of Teachers

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## STATEMENT BY THE SNAT ON THE RE-OPENING OF SCHOOLS AS ANNOUNCED BY THE ACTING PRIME MINISTER ON THURSDAY, (18-03-2021)

### I. INTRODUCTION

The Swaziland National Association of Teachers (SNAT), as the main stakeholder in the education system of the country, welcomes the decision by the central Government to re-open critical sectors of the economy in general and the re-opening of schools in particular. Our ardent belief is that education, as a public good, is a central driving force towards a holistic upliftment of the citizens of any society.

### II. ESSENCE OF THE STATEMENT

As the country is inexorably moving towards the official commencement of the 2021 school calendar year, the SNAT experts the Government of Eswatini to undertake the following, so as to ensure a safe – re-opening of schools.

1. The Government must ensure adequate provisioning of all COVID-19 materials and facilities in all the 933 public schools, chief amongst which is adequate water

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supply and Personal Protective Equipment [PPE] for all learners and educators.

2. The Government must employ at least 5 000 Teachers [on a permanent basis] to ensure full compliance regarding the number of learners that each teacher should handle at a particular time [teacher-pupil ratio]. Taking full recognisance of the fact that the third wave might hit us harder, each teacher should handle a maximum of 20 learners.
3. Since COVID-19 has caused unmatched psychological pain to both teachers and learners alike, the Government must urgently roll out psychosocial support for learners and teachers. This is very important since the human mind is the most important tool/organ that is used in effective classroom instruction. As the SNAT, we will also provide psycho-social support for our members, our learners and their parents.
4. In an endeavour to ensure smooth school re-opening, the Government must continue to train teachers and the schools' Rapid Response Teams on COVID-19 regulations and safety standards. It is true that the different variants call for high level of awareness by teachers and learners.
5. The vaccination of teachers should be urgently rolled out by the Government. However, only vaccines with a high efficacy levels such as Johnson and Johnson should be used. The budgeted E200 million which the Acting Prime Minister confirmed that it is available must be used to procure the vaccines, a slight delay on the teacher vaccination programme may quickly slip the country back to the dungeon of sickness and disease. As the SNAT, we are against the vaccination of teachers using the Oxford AstraZeneca vaccine because of its low efficacy level.

### **III. CONCLUSION**

As the SNAT, we have placed selected schools in a longitudinal study and we shall be conducting field observations to ascertain their level and state of readiness to operate in the face of the COVID-19, as the year progresses. Whilst the re-opening of schools is supported, health and safety issues for all citizens can never be compromised. The war against the COVID-19 pandemic must be fought by all of us and not just a selected few. As schools are set to re-open, we [SNAT] plead for support from all stakeholders including parents.



**ISSUED BY THE SNAT SG ON FRIDAY [19-03-2021]**



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