



REPUBLIC OF MALAWI

MINISTRY OF HEALTH

PRESS RELEASE

**NOTICE OF DECLARATION OF MPOX AS A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY OF CONTINENTAL SECURITY AND A PUBLIC HEALTH EMERGENCY OF INTERNATIONAL CONCERN**

The Ministry of Health through the Public Health Institute of Malawi wishes to inform the public that on 13<sup>th</sup> August, 2024, Africa Centre for Disease Control (CDC) declared mpox (formerly known as Monkey Pox) as a Public Health Emergency of Continental Security (PHECS) in Africa. On 14 August 2024, the World Health Organization (WHO) also determined that the upsurge of mpox constitutes a Public Health Emergency of International Concern (PHEIC) under the International Health Regulations (2005) (IHR). The declaration was made following the recent increase in cases of mpox in several African countries. This declaration is a call to action to enhance the global response, mitigate the impact of the health threat and protect public health while minimizing disruptions to travel and trade.

Mpox disease is a viral infection caused by the mpox virus. The disease is transmitted from one person to another by close contact with lesions, body fluids, respiratory droplets and contaminated materials such as beddings. Mpox presents with fever, an extensive characteristic rash and usually swollen lymph nodes. Various animal species have been identified as susceptible to the mpox virus. Eating inadequately cooked meat and other animal products of infected animals, contact with exposed persons and travel to affected areas are possible risk factors for acquiring the infection.

A total of 17,541 cases and 517 deaths have been recorded in 13 African countries in 2024. The majority of cases have been recorded in the SADC region with the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC) accounting for over 90% of cases and deaths. A new variant has been identified in the DRC that has spread to neighbouring countries. Of note is that the Republic of South Africa has reported 24 cases and 3 deaths to date. In the past one week alone 2,542 new cases and 56 deaths were reported in Africa. To date, Malawi has not reported any confirmed cases of mpox. Despite this status, Malawi is at great risk as mpox is now a global threat. The Ministry of Health commits to the Africa CDC and the WHO call for

action and would like to assure the public that it is on high alert and vigilantly conducting surveillance to prevent the disease or to timely detect and respond to any case that may occur. In addition the Ministry in collaboration with partners is implementing preparedness measures including surveillance and detection, risk communication and community engagement and logistics mobilization.

**‘Prevention is better than Cure’.** Therefore, the Ministry requests the public to continue observing prevention measures including avoiding physical contact with someone who has the disease or contaminated materials, regular handwashing with soap and reporting early to the nearest health facility if one experiences early symptoms of any disease including mpox (flue, fever, chills and body aches). Currently, there is no specific antiviral treatment approved specifically for mpox, but certain antivirals developed for smallpox have been used. Early supportive care is important to help manage symptoms and prevent complications. Vaccination can help prevent infection and is recommended for people at high risk especially during an outbreak. There are no mpox vaccines currently available in country, however the Ministry is working to secure vaccines for high risk groups.



Dr. Samson Mndolo  
**SECRETARY FOR HEALTH**  
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