**NATIONAL ASSEMBLY**

**QUESTION FOR WRITTEN REPLY**

**FRIDAY, 1 APRIL 2022**

**DUE DATE: 15 APRIL 2022**

**1333. The Leader of the Opposition (DA) to ask the President of the Republic:**

With reference to his repeated claims that the National Coronavirus Command Council is guided by the science when it takes decisions, on what (a) grounds did the Council ignore the advisory issued by the Ministerial Advisory Committee (i) on 21 July 2021 that all primary schools in the Republic should open at full capacity, as it found that the harms of rotational schooling would outweigh the benefits, until around 7 February 2022, (ii) on 8 February 2022 that the (aa) Government should remove the requirements for cross border travellers to undergo SARS-CoV-2 tests and (bb) requirement to wear masks outdoors be scrapped, until around 22 March 2022, given that both would have brought significant relief to the tourism industry and (iii) on 16 February 2022 that the restrictions placed on outdoor and indoor gatherings be lifted, including the 50% capacity and minimum physical distancing regulations, which would have brought significant relief to the events and entertainment industries, especially nightclubs and (b) scientific grounds are nightclubs still not allowed to operate?

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**REPLY**

The role of the COVID-19 Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) is to advise the Minister of Health with regards to managing cases of COVID-19 in the health system, interventions to control the spread of the disease, communication strategies, the research agenda and the economic impact on the health system.

The MAC develops advisories on specific issues in response to requests from the Minister for guidance on a particular issue or in response to new knowledge and developments as the pandemic evolves.

Following submission of an advisory to the Minister of Health, the Minister directs the response to the advisory which may include:

* activation, processing and implementation through internal departmental processes;
* engagement with other internal and external stakeholders;
* tabling at the National Coronavirus Command Council (NCCC) or Cabinet for deliberation and decision making.

In reaching decisions, the NCCC relies on contributions from numerous sectors and other stakeholders. While decisions are guided by scientific advice and evidence, additional social, economic, legal and behavioural considerations are also taken into account.