The Rwandan Ministry of Health has imposed a seven-day quarantine for passengers arriving from nine Southern African countries in the wake of the emergence of Covid-19 Omicron variant.

The decision was announced Monday, November 29, three days after Rwanda had reinstated a 24-hour quarantine for all arrivals.

The country has also suspended direct flights to the affected Southern African countries according to the statement released by the Health Ministry indicating that passengers arriving from Botswana, Eswatini, Lesotho, Malawi, Mozambique, Namibia, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe will undergo a one-week quarantine.

“Passengers travelling from the following countries (named above) or those with a recent travel history in those countries will have to quarantine upon arriving in Rwanda for seven days at their own cost,” reads part of the statement.

The statement added that the list will “continuously be updated upon assessment of global health conditions in consultation with the relevant international institutions”.

All other arriving passengers, according to the statement, will be mandated to present a negative Covid-19 PCR test, take a new one on arrival and be quarantined for one day upon arrival (all at their own expense), and conduct an additional PCR test on the 7th day after their arrival in Rwanda, that will be covered by the government.

Omicron, the latest variant of the coronavirus pandemic, was first reported in the Southern African region on November 25.

The highly contagious variant has since been confirmed in several other countries around the world, including Hong Kong, Israel, Belgium, Australia, Italy, UK, Germany, Austria and Denmark.

While recently speaking to national television, the Minister of Health, Dr Daniel Ngamije said that the new COVID-19 virus is highly contagious.

“The worrying news is that it combines other viruses and is harsh, according to researchers.”

He explained that Rwanda has not yet reached the point of establishing a Guma Home because information is still being collected and research is underway to

determine the nature of the virus.

“It simply came to our notice then. That question is not answered. When the death toll rises sharply, the virus is on the rise,” He added.

Rwandans are encouraged to have full immunization, regular check-ups and better implementation of COVID-19 prevention guidelines which include keeping the distance between the people, dressing well, opening the doors and windows to allow air to enter and wash your hands.