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A BETTER WAY FORWARD:  
TOWARDS ELIMINATION OF COVID-19

## Press Release: Independent Scientific Advocacy Group

**Press Conference:** Independent Scientific Advocacy Group (I.S.A.G.)  
**Time:** 10am - Tuesday 22 December 2020  
**Location:** Live on Zoom  
. ([https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN\\_XSCdnS0kT90vmXQpmGm78A](https://us02web.zoom.us/webinar/register/WN_XSCdnS0kT90vmXQpmGm78A))

Rapidly rising SARS-CoV2 infections and the emergence of a new lineage with potentially increased transmission rates mean we are once again facing into an emergency. Today, we are calling on the Irish Government to take decisive action and to commit to a full national lockdown from 26th December 2020. The reasons for this are outlined below, and will be discussed in detail at the press conference tomorrow morning.

- We are in an all-island crisis and urgent action is required. We cannot afford to wait. It will be too late by 6 January or by 30 December. Based on possible scenarios of between 8-12% growth in case numbers (assuming people have not already voluntarily changed behaviours) we expect 900-1300 daily cases by 28th December, and 2100-4500 by 6th January if no action is taken. We should assume that the new virus lineage is here already but in any event we are heading for 1500 cases per day by early January. *The Irish health system will break under this daily caseload.*
- This, in addition to the support we will be asked to give to our neighbours in Northern Ireland, will mean that our public health system will be under unprecedented pressure unless we act now.
- In terms of the economy, rolling lockdowns means rolling unemployment figures and rolling closures of Irish businesses for 2021. The economic and psychological cost of this may be too much for many of our citizens to continue to bear.
- The new lineage of SARS-CoV2 has brought the dangers of this virus into sharp focus. More circulation of the virus means increasing the chance of more mutations. When let spread too widely new variants will arise and some of these will threaten our health services and also the viability of the vaccine strategy.
- Europe has some of the highest infection rates worldwide. Now is time for strong leadership. Ireland is in a unique position now to provide that leadership.
- However, there is an *expiry date* on this – the optimal window to act is between now and Saturday, 26th December.
- The Republic is in a strong position because the Northern Ireland Assembly has already made a decision to commence a 6-week lockdown from 26th December. We just need to join them to secure the health of all people across our shared island.
- We now have a one-off opportunity to make the island an epidemiological unit, and secure a safer public health and economic future for all people on the island of Ireland for 2021.
- **Let this lockdown be our last.** We can suppress the virus, and keep Ireland at Level 1

for 2021, have a healthy society and thriving economy, and emerge stronger together as a nation that can lead Europe and show the world how the virus can be successfully controlled.

- Let Ireland (its government and its people) make history today, and for all the right reasons.

The Independent Scientific Advocacy Group (I.S.A.G.) is a multidisciplinary, all-island, group of scientists, academics, and researchers who have come together to advocate for a SARS-CoV-2 elimination strategy for the island of Ireland. You are invited to attend the ISAG Press Conference tomorrow morning, where members of the Independent Scientific Advocacy Group will be present to discuss the above.