

**Secretary-General's remarks to the press with the African Union Commission Chairperson and  
President of the World Bank  
on the Ebola crisis**

Addis Ababa, 28 October 2014

I am pleased to be here with the African Union Commission to discuss an issue of national, regional and global concerns to us all -- the world's response to Ebola.

With Dr. Zumba and President Kim and other partner organizations, we had extensive discussions on how our three organizations our three organizations - the United Nations, AU and the World Bank -- and other partners organizations and multilateral banks, development banks can help the international community's efforts to address the Ebola outbreak.

We are also here this week to discuss regional economic and social development issues, the important role being played by the Horn of Africa Development Initiative and regional security issues.

I thank Chairperson Dr. Zuma for convening this important meeting to exchange views on the Ebola epidemic, especially in light of her recent return from the region. I commend her initiative in visiting the three affected countries and am keen to hear her impressions and recommendations on the way forward.

Let me begin by offering my condolences for those whose lives have been taken by this unforgiving disease.

The world is facing an unprecedented Ebola outbreak.

Although your region remains unaffected, there have been more than 10,000 cases and 4,900 deaths in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

Transmission of the virus continues to outpace the response effort of the international community.

Ebola is a major global crisis that demands a massive and immediate global response.

No country or organization can defeat Ebola alone. We all have a role to play.

This is why effective regional partnerships are so vital in this battle.

I was also very heartened to learn of the recent pledges by African nations, most recently Ethiopia, Burundi and Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deploy medical personnel. Regional solidarity is crucial, and I salute their courage and dedication.

I am particularly encouraged by the decision of Nigeria and the Democratic Republic of the Congo to deploy medical personnel, and of Senegal to serve as a logistics hub for the response, following success in containing their own outbreaks.

We have much to learn from their experience.

I thank the Chairperson for her leadership in galvanizing efforts in the region, including through the deployment of the African Union Support to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa mission. I encourage this mission to coordinate closely with the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, or UNMEER.

I assure you of the UN's support to the success of your mission.

The affected countries have demonstrated great resilience. But they have asked the United Nations for assistance.

We are mobilizing rapidly to deploy resources and personnel.

I have established UNMEER to coordinate and augment the response, under the leadership of my Special Representative, Mr. Banbury. I am most grateful to Ghana for its willingness to host UNMEER.

My Special Envoy, Dr. David Nabarro, is working to galvanize international action. He is here with me today and will have additional consultations with African Union Chairperson.

The United Nations has a clear plan and is executing it in cooperation with its partners, such as the African Union, and in support of the governments of affected countries.

The gravity of the outbreak deserves our full attention.

However, it is also critical to remain calm.

We must convey a sense of urgency without inciting panic.

Some countries have imposed travel bans or closed their borders.

But this will only isolate the affected countries, and obstruct our response efforts. The only way to stop Ebola is to stop it at its source.

Yesterday, I issued a strong statement about quarantines which are not based on scientific evidence. And this will only hamper our efforts and will also undermine such a strong commitment by many health workers who are willing ready to visit and help the people on the ground.

I thank the African Union for its strong and consistent position on this point. I ask you continue to appeal to your member states not to impose travel restrictions or close their borders, but rather to deploy the essential human resources that will help to contain the outbreak.

We urgently need more trained foreign medical teams to deploy to the region.

I am in constant contact with world leaders to help us create dedicated medical facilities for in-country treatment of responders and to put in place medical evacuation mechanisms. These measures will further encourage qualified medical personnel to deploy to the region.

We have a long way ahead to contain and curb the Ebola outbreak and to help the affected countries rebuild their health systems to better withstand future shocks.

The longer the epidemic rages, the greater the risk of spread to other countries. Mali is the latest example in this regard. The importance of bolstering the preparedness of other countries in the region cannot be overstated.

I will continue to count on the African Union's leadership.

I look forward to discussing how the United Nations can help.

Thank you very much.

Q: I am the CCTV Correspondent. Two questions. In principle, every country in the world or the UN or everyone else understands that there is an aggressive demand for health workers in West Africa. But in response that is not happening. What is keeping countries to do that? Second question: this is a wake up call for everyone that the countries have poor infrastructures. Are you preparing yourself to prevent this kind of catastrophe in the future by helping African countries?

SG: Let me add to this eloquent, passionate commitment by the President of the World Bank. I fully agreed with what Dr. Kim just said and also I am very much encouraged that the African Union is now showing solidarity for all this African crisis. But this is more than an African crisis. It has become a global crisis which requires a global response, a massive global response. That is why I am here – to work with the African Union, to show my strong solidarity. I am very much encouraged by what Dr. Zuma has just said – that in addition to sending an African Union mission to the affected countries, they are going to have the mobilization of business leadership of Africa. Of course, the United Nations, World Bank and other international development banks like the African development bank, the Islamic Development Bank and other partners like the European Union will continue to mobilize resources, financial and logistic[al]. But it is very important to show that solidarity by the African leaders, political and business and civil society.

Addressing the second question about the infrastructures, if you look at the current health systems of those three countries, you will immediately understand why Ebola has taken place [as] an outbreak in these three countries. Those countries have either just graduated from many years of long civil strife, civil war and political instability, or in the case of Liberia, we still have one of the big peacekeeping missions still there. In the course of this political instability and civil war, they couldn't invest in strengthening their capacity in health systems. The sheer numbers of medical doctors in those countries is just unbelievably low. Therefore, while as Dr. Kim said, we have to put out this fire, burning fire, we have to think about the mid and longer term views, perspectives to strengthen their health systems, their capacity. This is what the United Nations is going to work [on], together with WHO and others. This should be much more important. But at this time, we have to treat the patients and we have to stop this virus and prevent the further spread of this virus -- going to neighboring countries or other parts of the world. This is what UNMEER [the United Nations Mission for Emergency Ebola response] is now doing. As you now, the General Assembly of the United Nations has taken an unprecedented way of establishing UNMEER. This mission will coordinate and cooperate with the African Union mission on the ground and also coordinate and cooperate with all our partners who will support from outside the region and inside the region. You can count on the United Nations' strong commitment to eliminate this virus as soon as possible. Thank you.

Q: [inaudible on China's contribution and on a possible visit to West Africa]

SG: Thank you, I will try to answer these two questions. For the first part of your question, Dr. Kim and I have explained at length. The basic priority proposal is that our mission, UNMEER, first stops this virus, second, treat the affected persons, thirdly, ensure that essential services will be provided, fourth, preserve the security and the stability of the countries affected, fifth, to prevent further spread of this Ebola to neighboring countries and outside of the continent. On all those five priorities, the United Nations is exerting all possible efforts whether it is financial or logistical support. I deeply appreciate many countries who have shown such strong support for humanity. Since you have asked about China's support, I have discussed at length with Chinese President and Chinese Premier on several occasions. Even just few days [ago], I had a telephone call with Premier ????. I met twice and discussed Ebola with President ???. They have send hundreds – a minimum of 200 I think—health workers. China was one of the first countries to have dispatched all this logistical support, including medical equipment. And I count on China's continued support. We need much much more [inaudible] support at this time. When this Ebola outbreak happened, I and Dr. Nabarro were emphasizing that we needed really 20-fold assistance. Now with all these immediate and urgent actions we have taken, I think our missions are now up and running. I have deployed, in addition to UNMEER in Accra which will work as a regional headquarter, I have also deployed three missions in the countries affected, with an Assistant Secretary-General level in charge. And we will continue to do that.

[On the] second question about my visit to West Africa, indeed I planed to visit West Africa around this time but I decided to postpone a little bit to find a better timing.

As you know, UNMEER was established less than a month ago and they are overburdened. The first priority is to coordinate and support the people who need our support. Had I been there, at this time, there would be lots of logistics, logistics would be taken and their very valuable time and energy will be distracted and will have to be diverted. And more importantly, I really wanted to have some closer

coordination with the African Union first and other international multilateral development banks who are joining here – and I really appreciate your strong support. And now I am discussing this matter with Special Envoy, Dr. Nabarro, and Tony Banbury -- when would be the most opportune timing for me to visit and meet the people and leaders of the three countries. As you may now, even before going there, I had been in constant contact with the leaders of these three countries. I have convened a summit meeting on Ebola at the United Nations on 25 September. All the leaders participated either via video or in the person. And World Bank convened another such meeting, high level meeting, in Washington, D.C. I am constant contact daily with all world leaders, including the leadership of the affected countries. I will continue to do that and I will try to set a date at an appropriate time.

Thank you.