

As delivered

BRIEFING BY DR. DAVID NABARRO,
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TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
NEW YORK, 18 FEBRUARY 2015

Your Excellency Mr. Sam Kutesa, President of the General Assembly,
Mr Secretary-General
Excellencies,
Ladies and Gentlemen,

I would like to start my remarks by thanking you personally for your unfailing commitment. I thank you, Mr. President, for convening this meeting today.

There are now ten times fewer people diagnosed with Ebola each week than there were in September last year. It has been remarkable progress. Yet in preventing the final 10% of infections about 120 or 130 per week may well be the hardest part of the response. Until this hard part, this last part is completed, the affected nations, and the world, cannot declare victory.

Mr. President, I hope you will allow me to focus on five particular elements of what the Secretary-General and SRSG Ould Cheikh Ahmed covered in the remarks that they made.

First: This idea of commitment. Ismail affirmed that UNMEER is committed to getting to zero. **I can assure you that the broad coalition of governments and their response partners, together with the agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system, are fully behind the Declaration of the Mano River Summit last Sunday to end**

Ebola in 60 days. They will work hard and coordinate support for an intensive, country-led and community-driven push to end this outbreak within the period. We are building on the hard work of last year, all the beds that were set up for Ebola treatment – all the burial teams – all the behavioural changes. Now what we need to do is to ensure that there is in place all the needed capacity in each of the 63 prefectures, counties and districts, almost in an area as big as France. And what have they got to do to assure strong surveillance, to identify people with Ebola, to confirm diagnosis, to quickly arrange effective treatment, to identify the people who are their contacts and to keep those people under review for 21 days. This is a really difficult task – it is like detective work, but it is detective work where you have to find a small number of people in a very large number of people, and people move around a lot in this region.

Identifying and tracing people who are contacts is absolutely vital as the only place this virus can survive is **in people**. If we find and monitor every person who is a contact, we can find and stop every chain of transmission and the outbreak can be ended quickly and definitively. Our ambition is to ensure that all people newly diagnosed with Ebola are known contacts of others who have been confirmed to have the disease. But we are not there yet. In recent weeks that figure – the percentage of news cases has sometimes been quite low as 20%. In these circumstances it is not surprising that there have been unexpected flare-ups of disease in places that were thought to be Ebola-free.

Now it is not easy tracing contacting. But it tends to be most effective when communities are fully engaged in the effort – and are working in harmony with the responders. Hence the extra emphasis, among all responders, on finding ways to engage even the most reticent of communities: this is being

done in ways that lead to the building of trust. There really is no other way to succeed.

Second: **The UN system and other partners require additional finance to support the work of national governments as they strive to “Get to Zero”.** Now none of us like to sit in front of you and to beg for resources. But I think I have to stress to you that the tasks we are doing now are costly. The cost was assessed in January and is presented in the latest “Outlook of Needs and Requirements” for the UN system and partners, released in January this year and we are of course very eager to share it with you. If this intensive effort is to be sustained – and had to be sustained for much of this year, the total cost will be around \$1.5 billion. We have some money in the bank, we have around \$600 million. This leaves a shortfall in finance: the agencies, funds and programmes of the UN system are appealing for more. Now as the Secretary-General said we are rather proud of one of the mechanisms we set up, the Secretary-General’s Trust Fund. It moves funds quickly to those who are most in need. So far, since it was set up in September 2014, it has received income from 31 nations and one private sector group and distributed \$131 million in strategic support for the response. The operations of the Fund are entirely transparent: this week we will show you how transparent the operations of this fund are. We will publish a first report of what has been done with all funds contributed and spent. More than 90% of the contributed funds have been distributed. We request further contributions from Governments and organizations yet to contribute, as well as replenishments from those who have already done so.

Third: **The people and governments of the affected countries are now reviving basic services – they are getting government working again, schooling, health care, and markets.** It is not easy to revive these in the

context of a continuing Ebola outbreak: it is a tough task. It is not easy for doctors and nurses to work knowing their patients might have Ebola. Our challenge is to ensure safe revival of services. International responders, especially from within Africa, and particularly through the African Union's ASEOWA initiative, are playing a vital role in this revival and continue to need the strong support of Member States. UNDP is leading a joint effort by the World Bank, the UN, the EU and the African Development Bank to support an Ebola Recovery Assessment. The UNDP Administrator, Helen Clark, is today in Freetown, Sierra Leone. Early this morning she sent me the following three messages.

1 Stopping the outbreak continues to be the top priority of the three governments and all partners. The last mile is never easy. The outbreak isn't over in one country until it's over in all three countries. While the situation in, say, Sierra Leone is not what it was in October/November, nonetheless it is still a major crisis because the deadly contagious disease is still moving around the country.

2 Big partnerships are needed to defeat the disease. Government leadership and international solidarity have been vital in tackling the outbreak, but without community engagement and empowerment and behavior change, the outbreak could not be stopped. Community leaders and volunteers of all ages are playing a huge role.

3 Global solidarity for recovery is vital. To walk away when zero cases has been achieved would be unconscionable. Essential services need to be rebuilt - or built where they never existed; livelihoods need to be kick started; the vulnerable, including widows, children, the elderly, and the disabled, who have been so severely impacted all need support. The support will need to be sequenced from the short term to the medium and longer term - and should be framed in the context of the national development plans.

Fourth: **The UN Mission on Ebola Emergency Response will undergo a transition.** UNMEER was approved by this General Assembly in September as an innovative and short-term mechanism to deliver time-limited back up to the response. I have seen the real value UNMEER is providing in supporting national actions and in coordinating others involved in the response. I support the leadership of Ismail and his dedicated team. The UN's contribution to the collective response will progressively be transferred to the agencies, funds and programmes as they establish the capacity needed to help eliminate Ebola and revive basic services.

Fifth: **There will be a Conference in Brussels on 3 March. This will be an important event to agree on the road to zero, to identify current gaps in the response, and to start to plan for recovery.** The conference will be co-chaired by the African Union, the Presidents of Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Togo, Chair of ECOWAS. Also co-chairing is the European Union and the United Nations. This will be important and it will be followed by a meeting to mobilize resources for revival and recovery. It will be hosted here in New York by the UN Secretary-General at the end of May.

Mr. President, I conclude with two observations and one final thought.

Number one: as we have said before in this Assembly, **the outbreak will not be over until the last case has been traced and treated.** The UN system will remain fully and responsibly engaged until this outbreak is ended and through the period of recovery.

Number two: We know that there will be further outbreaks of haemorrhagic fevers and other dangerous diseases in the future in many parts of our world. **Throughout this**

response our system is focusing on ways to apply lessons so that nations and regions can respond more rapidly and effectively to future threats.

Mr. President, **the people of this region in Western Africa have endured enormous suffering as a result of this outbreak. Now all of us when we work have people we look to alongside. In our case it is the people of West Africa.** We feel them guiding us as to what we must do, checking that we do it right and urging us to do more so that this cruel tragedy is promptly brought to an end. Every day we recommit to serving them as best we can. We thank you in this General Assembly for giving us the political support and the means to do this.
