

Opening remarks by Dr. David Nabarro, Secretary-General's Special Envoy on Ebola to General Assembly Informal Meeting on Ebola, 13 November 2014

Mr. President and senior colleagues, thank you very much indeed for the opportunity to present to the Excellencies here in the General Assembly, and to add my own appreciation to that just expressed by the Special Representative, Anthony Banbury.

When I was here a month ago, I described Ebola as the most extraordinary challenge – at the least the most extraordinary public health challenge that I believed the world could face. And since that time I have been humbled by the pace and scale of the response. And I have been privileged indeed to have been part of that process.

I'd like to start by saying that I think that we should all build on what Tony Banbury has said: that the actions by communities in the affected countries as well as by the local governments and national governments have been really exemplary, and we now have very good evidence that shows that people are changing the way that they live and the way that they behave to reduce the likelihood that they will experience this disease.

This people-based response is very much at the heart, therefore, of some of the really positive changes that are being seen. They are not everywhere. It's not throughout the region. It's in some parts of the region, and it's supported by very strong international and national backing and support.

I've been impressed by the way in which those who are providing support are willing to coordinate under the leadership of national governments, and how globally we have seen a coalition, a Global Ebola Response Coalition, developing and functioning as a joined-up community – and, within that, our own United Nations system coming together with a level of coordination that is really unprecedented.

And we are having to go further than just working together, Mr. President. We are also having to be in a position where – like a shoal of fish moving suddenly when a new current comes along – we are having to be able to together adjust what we are doing in the light of new challenges as they emerge.

And it's that ability for collective adjustment in the face of a changing situation that is at the centre of the strategic effort right now. It means pushing out people and capacities to the most remote areas of each country – something I know that has been a high priority for all the presidents and

their governments, and it's something that is absolutely key to be able to respond to changing circumstances.

Governments are telling us that they would like us to be looking at the longer term issues at the same time as focusing on the most immediate challenges. And that, I believe, is extremely important because the long-term is now. Unless the response can be focusing at the same time on capacities for the future I believe it will not be at the quite the level that is needed.

So as we look forward to the next 30 days of UNMEER, the next 30 days of a tireless response, let us continue to provide the maximum possible support to people and governments. [Let us] continue to mobilize the essential resources that are needed for this sustained effort – to ensure that there is adequate capacity everywhere -- to anticipate new challenges as they come along – to all the time question “are our actions adding value, or are there more things that we can do?” – to stay strong, flexible and to adapt – and, most of all, to oppose any emergence of stigma and discrimination that so badly undermines our collective effort.

Thank you again, colleagues, for the way that we have all worked together on this, and I look forward to the forthcoming debate.