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STATEMENT BY

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**PRESIDENT OF THE 69TH SESSION OF THE
UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY**

AT PLENARY MEETING ON EBOLA

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**Mr. Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Distinguished Colleagues,**

Over the last six months, the Ebola outbreak has ravaged countries in West Africa, in an unprecedented manner. Today, we come together as a family of nations in solidarity with the most affected countries - Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, which have demonstrated great resolve and determination in the face of this daunting challenge.

Later on, the Secretary-General will brief this Assembly on the response of the United Nations system to the outbreak of Ebola in West Africa. I commend him for his personal efforts on this matter. I also thank Dr. Margaret Chan, Director-General of the World Health Organization and Dr. David Nabarro, the Secretary-General's Special Envoy for their dedicated efforts.

The World Health Organization reports that about 2,500 people have so far died out of nearly 5,000 infected by the Ebola virus. As shocking as these statistics are, the actual number of casualties from Ebola is likely to be much higher, with many deaths going unreported.

The virus is spreading exponentially, with half of all cases having been recorded in just the last three weeks. The predictions from the World Health Organization are ominous – given its current rate of infection, as many as 20,000 people could be infected with the Ebola virus over the next few months.

Distinguished Colleagues,

The time to act in a swift, coordinated and purposeful manner is now. Without quick and decisive action, the trail of devastation this outbreak leaves behind will reach far beyond the portions of West Africa most affected up to now. Ebola is no longer a sub-regional or even regional calamity – it is an international crisis.

Our immediate focus must be on containing the outbreak, both in terms of its geographical spread and the number of casualties. As the Secretary-General has pointed out, the Ebola crisis has evolved into a

complex emergency, with significant political, social, economic, humanitarian and security dimensions.

The outbreak is unmatched, both in terms of lives lost and damage to already fragile health systems. Precious resources are being diverted from other critical diseases and affected countries are struggling to maintain basic health services, with people dying from otherwise treatable medical conditions.

Women are particularly at risk, given their roles as primary caregivers and community leaders. In Liberia, estimates indicate that as many as 75 per cent of fatalities are women, while in Sierra Leone, that number is around 59 per cent. Women are much more likely to be front-line health workers, which also puts them at higher risk.

The outbreak could have far-reaching de-stabilizing impacts and comes at a time when the three most-affected countries were embracing relative peace, security and stability. Prior to the outbreak, each had made collective efforts to enhance socio-economic development and consolidate hard-won peacebuilding achievements. We must not allow Ebola to turn back the tide of progress for these countries.

Excellencies,

In light of these tragic developments, we have before us a draft resolution in which the General Assembly welcomes the Secretary-General's plan to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER). As envisioned, the Mission will harness capabilities and competencies across the United Nations system in a single, unified structure to ensure a rapid, effective, efficient and coherent response to the crisis, supporting national, regional and international efforts.

The draft resolution also calls on Member States and relevant United Nations bodies to provide their full support to this critical Mission. In due course, the Secretary-General will submit a detailed report for consideration by the General Assembly during this session.

Today, the General Assembly should add its powerful voice to that of the Security Council in calling on the international community to take immediate steps to support those countries affected by this deadly virus. While a high price has already been paid, the cost of inaction could reach unimaginable proportions. Together, we must take immediate, coordinated, decisive action to combat this destructive outbreak.

I thank you for your attention.