



Press Release

The UN will continue to support prevention and response efforts against Ebola in Guinea-Bissau- UNMEER SRSG

Bissau/Conakry, 25 June (UNIOGBIS/UNMEER) – The Acting Special Representative of the UN Secretary-General and Head of (UNMEER), Peter Graaff, ended a two-day official visit today in Guinea-Bissau, calling on authorities and citizens to remain vigilant against Ebola.

Peter Graaff arrived in Guinea-Bissau on 24 June with the intention of assessing the country's level of preparedness in case Ebola crosses the border.

At a press conference before leaving, the Head of UNMEER said that what he has heard and seen in the past two days is very encouraging even if more should be done technically to improve preparedness and response capacity. "I am pleased with the engagement of the government and partners in keeping Guinea-Bissau shielded from Ebola because the virus is real and is at the doorsteps of Bissau. I am also pleased to see that there is cross-border cooperation between Guinea and Guinea-Bissau, to minimize the risk of the virus arriving here", he added.

As part of his agenda, Peter Graaff and his delegation went on 25 June to Quebo to look at prevention and surveillance measures put in place at the Cuntabane Border post adjacent to the Republic of Guinea. The prefecture of Boke in Guinea has been registering Ebola cases for the past two months.

Calling for an effective implementation of preparedness and response measures designed by the government of Guinea-Bissau with support from the UN system in the country, SRSG Graaf promised that UNMEER and the entire UN System will continue to support prevention and response efforts in Guinea-Bissau.

To him, as seen in affected countries, national leadership and good coordination are very important beside preventive measures such as cleaning of hands, systematic temperature checks at entry and departure points and in hospitals and various healthcare centers.

"But above all, the role of communities will be the determining factor in preventing Ebola from coming to Guinea-Bissau, or from spreading if the virus does appear in the country", he stressed, explaining that "just because there has not been any Ebola in Guinea-Bissau doesn't mean that people should let up surveillance. With the situation in Boke, this is the time to be particularly vigilant".

The area of Boke that never experienced Ebola cases until the end of April is a case in point and it is very close to Cuntabane in Guinea-Bissau.

During his stay in the country, SRSG Graaff met with Prime Minister Domingos Simões Pereira, the Minister of Health Mrs. Valentina Mendes. He also visited a standby Ebola treatment unit at the Simao Mendes Hospital in Bissau and convened with numerous UN and non-UN partners.

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