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THE SECRETARY-GENERAL
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REMARKS TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY
New York, 18 February 2015

We met five months ago when the world was coming to terms with an unprecedented outbreak of Ebola in West Africa.

The outbreak was gaining ground every hour, outpacing response efforts.

You recognized the grave threat that Ebola posed to the region and beyond. You welcomed the deployment of the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response - UNMEER: the first of its kind in the history of the United Nations.

Local, national, regional and international capacities mobilized in solidarity with the affected communities and countries to support nationally-led response efforts.

With the leadership of Presidents Condé, Koroma and Sirleaf Johnson, national governments and communities took proactive steps to protect themselves, leading to reduced risks of infection and lower incidence rates.

Today, we face a critical turning point.

The pattern of the Ebola outbreak has changed.

2015 has seen a significant decline in the number of new Ebola cases in the three affected countries.

Liberia, once the worst affected country with several hundred cases per week, has been steadily reporting fewer than five cases per week for the past month, all isolated to a single chain of transmission in one county.

While overall figures remain much lower than what we saw in 2014, incidence rates rose again in Guinea and Sierra Leone in recent weeks. More than half of those newly infected have not been in contact with people known to have had Ebola. This reminds us that setbacks can quickly follow apparent gains, and highlights the need for constant vigilance and active surveillance, even in unaffected areas.

Notre action va être compliquée par la saison des pluies, imminente, durant laquelle d'autres maladies vont gagner du terrain et certaines routes vont devenir impraticables. En vue d'une meilleure maîtrise de la situation, le système des Nations Unies, agissant par

l'intermédiaire de la MINUAUCE, mobilise des moyens supplémentaires pour aider les autorités nationales et locales de la Guinée et de la Sierra Leone.

Nous redoublons d'efforts pour atteindre l'objectif fixé par les présidents des pays de l'Union du fleuve Mano le 15 février dernier : l'absence totale de nouveaux cas entre cette date et la mi-avril, soit pendant 60 jours.

Avec une action vigoureuse et efficace, nous pouvons juguler l'épidémie d'Ebola.

Mais si les populations, les gouvernements et les partenaires relâchent leur vigilance, recourent à des pratiques dangereuses et ne mènent pas une surveillance active, et si les donateurs décident de ne pas financer cet effort vital, il y aura de nouvelles flambées et l'épidémie pourrait reprendre de plus belle.

Too much progress has been made and too much is at stake to afford complacency. We must finish the job.

Our collective efforts have made remarkable progress. We have succeeded in averting the worst-case scenarios we feared.

There are encouraging signs that the worst of the outbreak is behind us.

But much important work lies ahead until the affected countries reach zero cases and begin the transition to reconstruction and recovery.

I call on all responders to redouble their efforts, and on donors to stay the course.

Under the technical leadership of the World Health Organization, the UN system will continue supporting efforts to get to zero through active surveillance, case management and community engagement. The UN system will also contribute to the safe revival of essential services.

As the situation improves, the time will come for critical functions to transition progressively and seamlessly from UNMEER to the UN agencies, funds and programmes.

Significant additional resources will be required by the UN system.

My Special Envoy, Dr. Nabarro, will continue to mobilize the resources needed to fill critical gaps, including through my Trust Fund.

The UN system will work with national governments and regional partners to ensure that the investments made in the fight to stop Ebola serve as a basis for longer-term recovery efforts.

We must help the affected countries to become more resilient. Ebola must not be allowed to take hold again in the region.

I appeal to you today to stay engaged and sustain this crucially important work.

Let us provide the resources needed to get to zero.

Let us ensure that reconstruction and recovery can occur without delay.

Let us translate the lessons from this collective effort into building stronger national systems for health security.

And lastly, I would like to thank all Member States for your strong support for UNMEER, led by Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed and his team who have been working very hard, selflessly, under very difficult and dangerous situations. And I also highly commend Dr. David Nabarro, the Special Envoy, for his continuing support and vision to help our efforts to get to zero cases and eliminate Ebola. I count on your continued support and leadership. Thank you very much.

Merci.
