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GRAVELY CONCERNED OVER EBOLA OUTBREAK IN WEST AFRICA, GENERAL ASSEMBLY
ADOPTS RESOLUTION SIGNALLING APPROVAL FOR MISSION TO HANDLE RESPONSE

Expressing grave concern over the recent deadly Ebola outbreak in West Africa, the General Assembly this afternoon signalled its approval for United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon's intention to set up an international emergency response mission and called upon all Member States to fully support it.

Unanimously adopting a resolution on measures to contain and combat the virus (document A/69/L.2), as orally revised, the Assembly asked the Secretary-General to take steps to promptly establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, or UNMEER, and to submit a detailed report on that matter for the Assembly to consider at its current session.

In identical letters dated 17 September to the Presidents of the Assembly and the Security Council (document A/69/389-S/2014/679), the Secretary-General sets forth the Mission's six guiding principles and 12 actions deemed critical by the Senior United Nations System Coordinator to carry out the Mission's aims. Those steps would cost almost \$1 billion over the next six months.

"We are all aware of the immensity of the suffering in West Africa and the enormity of the challenge," Mr. Ban said, urging the global community to work in unorthodox ways and break institutional barriers and other hurdles to get the crisis under control. "The establishment of the UNMEER is just the beginning. We will need to stay engaged, and we will need to reach new heights of cooperation. No single State, and no single organization, can do this alone."

The virus had already claimed more than 2,500 lives — most of them women, who formed the bulk of health-care workers and caregivers of the sick, he said. Citing World Health Organization (WHO) figures, he said there were nearly 5,000 cases of Ebola infection in West

Africa, but that given the shortfalls in reporting and monitoring, that number was likely much higher. "None of us is insulated from the threat of Ebola: all of us must be part of the response," he said.

What began as a public health emergency had become a crisis with significant economic, social, humanitarian, political and security consequences, he said, threatening to permanently undo recent development and security gains in the three most affected countries — Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea — after years of war and atrocity.

WHO had developed a response road map and was working with the affected nations to identify the best possible epidemiological response, including through a mix of Ebola treatment and community care centres, he said. The new United Nations Mission, to be based in Accra, Ghana, would focus on stopping the outbreak, treating the infected, providing essential services, preserving stability, and preventing outbreaks in non-affected countries.

Echoing those concerns, Sam Kutesa (Uganda), President of the General Assembly, who introduced the resolution, said the virus was spreading exponentially, with half of all cases having been recorded in just the last three weeks. It was no longer a subregional or even regional calamity, but an international crisis. According to WHO, at the current rate of infection, as many as 20,000 people could be infected in the next few months.

"The time to act in a swift, coordinated and purposeful manner is now," he said. "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." The outbreak, he warned, could have far-reaching, destabilizing impacts and came at a time when the three most-affected countries were embracing relative peace, security and stability.

After the text's adoption, the Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia and representatives of Sierra Leone and Guinea took the floor to commend the Secretary-General's swift action to install an emergency mission on the ground, thank Governments and organizations that had given military, financial, medical, personnel and logistical support, and call on Member States to lift travel bans to the affected countries. In addition, several representatives cited their respective Government's steps and financial pledges to help contain the virus.

Also speaking today was the Minister for Health of South Africa.

Other speakers included the representatives of Malawi (on behalf of the African States), European Union, United States, Argentina, Kenya, India, Mozambique, Ecuador, Venezuela, United Kingdom, Mexico, Brazil, Japan, Canada, El Salvador, China, Cuba, Indonesia, Australia, Uganda, France, Sweden, United Republic of Tanzania and Ghana.

Statements after Adoption

AUGUSTINE KPEHE NGAFUAN, Minister for Foreign Affairs of Liberia, called on all Member States to take critical actions to implement the text. The disease's rapid spread had confounded Governments in the region and their partners at a time when those nations were experiencing peace after years of conflict. Liberia's health system was not prepared to take on an epidemic of such magnitude. Nearly 80 per cent of those infected with the virus succumbed to it. The fear created by the outbreak was undermining Liberia's overall health care system and its ability to respond to other pressing medical concerns including malaria, diarrhoea, typhoid fever and pregnancy-related complications. Many Government functions had been suspended to deal with the emergency. The Government, World Health Organization (WHO), Médecins

San Frontières and the United States Centre for Disease Control had taken measures that were unsuccessful in controlling the virus' transmission.

Restricting travel to and from the most affected countries and banning flights would only aggravate the outbreak and undermine efforts to contain it, he said. He praised nations that were now opening their borders to fight the disease and encouraged others to follow suit. The United States announced a level of support to the region that would have monumental impact. Yesterday's Security Council meeting gave an impressive number of Member States the chance to indicate their support. That ensured that the people in Liberia and the diaspora were not alone. He commended the Secretary-General's prudent, swift action. A new mission would ensure strong United Nations leadership, effective coordination and swift delivery of supplies and services. He commended all international partners for working to bring the disease to an early end.

AARON MOTSOALEDI, Minister for Health of South Africa, said the virus had painfully highlighted how a public health issue could hinder a country's economy and showed the urgent need to enforce measures to contain it. The outbreak continued to escalate and expand geographically. Laboratory capacity to address it was gradually expanding but there were critical needs in several locations. In response, South Africa had provided a mobile laboratory in Sierra Leone; it would provide further support for Liberia, and planned to set up a 40-bed field hospital there, staffed by 75 health professionals. Recruitment of those professionals was under way. It would also provide four ambulances, four generators and 70 vehicles.

South Africa had called on many partners in the private sector to provide aid, he said. His Government received pledges of support, from companies listed on the Johannesburg stock exchange, in the form of logistics, air travel, ambulances and medical supplies. On 26 September, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) would begin training 16 countries to help strengthen surveillance. South African hospitals would also enhance clinical management of infected patients; 11 hospitals in the country were on standby in case of an Ebola outbreak.

CHARLES P. MSOSA (Malawi), speaking on behalf of the African States, welcomed the resolution adopted in the Assembly. The outbreak was unprecedented and people, including traders and farmers, lived in fear now. The crisis was giving a hard time to post-conflict countries. The African Union had commenced initiatives to tackle the problem, including a decision taken on 19 August by its Peace and Security Council. It was important to listen to voices on the ground, and vital to harmonize all strategic efforts in Africa.

NAFSIKA NANCY EVA VRAILA of the European Union Delegation said the outbreak of Ebola was no longer a regional problem. The bloc welcomed the Secretary-General's plan to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. All relevant parts of the United Nations system should be activated to support that organ. The Union would continue assisting the most affected areas through the United Nations, regional organizations and non-governmental organizations. It had pledged 150 million euros. In addition, it had contributed 5 million euros to the African Union.

VANDI CHIDI MINAH (Sierra Leone) paid tribute to the medical staff that had given their lives to the virus and said the Ebola outbreak was now a global health emergency. With the help of the global community, he was confident the necessary supplies would make their way to the region and expressed confidence that the United Nations mission would be set up as soon as possible and that the affected countries would regain their development momentum. The World Bank had already recorded a drop in their development level. As the epidemic had a dis-

proportionate impact on women, the response must be gender-sensitive. The road ahead would be difficult. Everyone had a role to play. "A culture of fear should not be allowed to let this epidemic metastasize into something greater," he said. Various supplies were en route to Sierra Leone and various non-governmental organizations had advocated support for efforts to address the virus.

MAMADI TOURÉ (Guinea) said the unprecedented crisis, in full swing in his country and neighbouring Liberia and Sierra, required urgent steps to save lives. The epidemic had already claimed more than 2,400 lives, including caregivers in Guinea, where the outbreak began in March. It had gravely impacted the region's economies, slowing trade, economic activity, investment and tourism. The World Bank had warned that if the outbreak did not subside, its economic impact would be catastrophic. Already it had significantly increased prices for basic food items. It was imperative to end the crisis, and international intervention was vital and must be well coordinated. Guinea's people and Government were committed to cooperating closely with the United Nations mission to ensure its success. He thanked WHO, Médecins Sans Frontières, the United States Center for Disease Control, and nations such as Morocco and Malawi for their support, solidarity and friendship.

ELIZABETH COUSENS of the United States strongly supported the Secretary-General's plan to establish the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response. On 18 September, about 130 countries had come together to co-sponsor a Security Council resolution to scale up the global response to the Ebola outbreak. Today, the Assembly had come together to support the Secretary-General's plan. Her Government would use its specialized capabilities in support of those efforts and urged other Governments and stakeholders to join. It was not the commitment made that was important, but rather the commitment delivered.

MARÍA CRISTINA PERCEVAL (Argentina) said she attended today's meeting because the Assembly was the most representative body, welcoming the consensus adoption of the resolution in support of establishing the crisis-response mission. The Secretary-General had said the outbreak was not a health problem, but rather a multidimensional threat with humanitarian, social and economic impact. The affected countries did not deserve that as they charted a path to development. The crisis also revealed ongoing concerns about poverty and inequality.

MACHARIA KAMAU (Kenya) said the Ebola crisis posed among the worst threats in the world today. No one was safe from its reach. The lessons of the HIV/AIDS epidemic must not be forgotten. The crisis must be recognized and defined as a threat to international peace and security, and as a global humanitarian catastrophe. The response must commensurate to the challenge, technically thorough and in solidarity with affected countries to free them from isolation. Kenya had put in place a national preparedness programme at home, and donated \$1 million total to the three affected countries. It would share its expertise on Ebola management, diagnostic capabilities and health-care workers with those nations. The Cabinet Secretary for Foreign Affairs had announced the Government was working to review the ban on flights to affected countries.

ASOKE KUMAR MUKERJI (India) expressed grave concern over the virus. His Government had provided medicines and financial aid to its counterparts in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone, and had contributed funds to WHO to address the virus. India had troops available in the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL). As 45,000 Indian nationals lived in West Africa, India stood in solidarity with the people in that region.

ANTÓNIO GUMENDE (Mozambique) commended those countries that had already pledged provision of resources to assist the most affected countries, as well as their neighbours, including the announced deployment of personnel under the African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak mission.

XAVIER LASSO MENDOZA (Ecuador) expressed solidarity with West African countries, especially Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. His Government consulted with officials from those countries to identify their people's needs. He underscored the general support extended by Cuba despite the illegal blockade it faced.

SAMUEL MONCADA (Venezuela), expressing concern over the epidemic, said that action was needed to contain it, with a gender-specific focus as most of the victims were women. In Quito, from 8 to 9 September, the first meeting of the Special Committee of the South American-African Cooperation Forum expressed grave concern over the epidemic's consequences, and decided that the Union of South American Nations should hold a meeting as soon as possible to find ways to support the region. His Government was looking at ways to urgently do that.

MARTIN SHEARMAN (United Kingdom), associating himself with the European Union Delegation, said the international community must work to combat the virus and prevent its spread. He welcomed adoption of the Council resolution and the Secretary-General's intention to create a special mission towards that end. His Government would provide a \$60 million health-care centre in the affected region, military experts and staff from Save the Children United Kingdom. On 17 September, it had announced a significant increase in its package of support, with a total of 700 treatment beds for Sierra Leone. It would deliver another 500 treatment beds and staff to operate them. It was partnering with WHO, Médecins Sans Frontières, UNICEF and other aid actors.

The representative of Mexico said his delegation felt that the convening of today's meeting was timely as it followed yesterday's adoption of the Security Council resolution to scale up global response to the Ebola outbreak. The response must be borderless. Today's adoption of the Assembly resolution that backed the establishment of the crisis-response mission was a clear testimony of international cooperation.

ANTONIO DE AGUIAR PATRIOTA (Brazil) said the Peacebuilding Commission would serve as a common platform in New York for discussion, information-sharing and awareness-raising. His Government would have liked recognition of the Commission's early warning function in today's resolution.

The representative of Japan supported the Assembly resolution and expected the United Nations to combat the virus as one unified body. So far, his Government had committed \$5 million for West Africa, and had dispatched Japanese doctors and medical suits for health-care workers to the region. It stood ready to provide a new medication against Ebola developed by two Japanese pharmaceutical companies. In the long-term, it would continue to support affected countries' national efforts to combat the disease.

MICHAEL DOUGLAS GRANT (Canada) expressed deep concern over the crisis. Canada made early contributions to the emergency response, deploying experts, vaccines and material and financial support to the region. It had contributed to WHO, Médecins Sans Frontières and local offices of the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC), and deployed a mobile laboratory to Sierra Leone with rotating teams of laboratory technicians, as well as four dele-

gates of the Canadian Red Cross and four of Canada's UNICEF office. It had provided more than \$2.5 million in medical equipment to WHO and nearly 1,000 doses of an experimental vaccine in addition to actively contributing to expert panels on Ebola.

RUBÉN IGNACIO ZAMORA RIVAS El Salvador said that the Ebola outbreak required prompt efficient and joint efforts. It supported the Secretary-General's proposal to establish the crisis-response Mission, which would work hand in hand with WHO and other programmes and agencies of the United Nations. In his country, more than 80 doctors and medical personnel had signed up for rendering services in West Africa.

WANG HAO China said that "time means life". With the passage of time, it would become harder to put the disease under control. China experienced the Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome disease in 2003 and understood the suffering of the people of West Africa. His country had 174 medical experts in the most affected countries. Yesterday, it decided to provide 200 million yuan in additional aid for West African nations and to give \$2 million each to WHO and the African Union.

RODOLFO REYES RODRÍGUEZ (Cuba) expressed solidarity with the affected countries and support for the Secretary-General's proposed emergency response mission. "We can pull this off. The people — the women, the children of West Africa — deserve this response," he said. Every member of Cuba's specialized medical response team had more than 15 years experience addressing medical epidemics. Cuba would work with all countries, including those with which it did not have diplomatic relations, to help combat the disease. Cuba's more than 4,000 health workers stood ready.

MASNI ERIZA (Indonesia) said a coordinated international response to combat Ebola's spread was vital. He fully supported the Secretary-General's initiative and expressed hope that the crisis could be contained soon.

PHILIPPA JANE KING (Australia) said action was urgent as there was much catching up to do to reverse the epidemic's spread. A coordinated, comprehensive response was vital. She strongly supported the Secretary-General's proposed mission, and stood in solidarity with the affected countries. Australia's Foreign Minister recently announced that his Government would give another \$7 million, including for the WHO coordinated regional response. Australia would continue to assess areas where it could best contribute.

RICHARD NDUHUURA (Uganda) said that as soon as the first cases of Ebola were identified, public health officials in his country had created makeshift quarantines and called a press conference together with WHO. It exposed the problem right away and de-mystified any stigma attached to it. Uganda sent 20 top Ebola experts to Sierra Leone and Liberia in July.

FRANCOIS XAVIER DENIAU (France) said the health crisis, due to its scale, had turned into a social and economic problem, becoming a threat to peace and security. He underscored the importance of "act, coordinate and prevent". France had made financial contributions and on 18 September its President announced the establishment of a military hospital in Guinea. He also described how the European Union was coordinating efforts while stressing the importance of preventive measures.

CARL ORRENIUS SKAU (Sweden) welcomed the Secretary-General's initiative to soon convene a high-level meeting on the matter and today's Assembly decision to set up an emergency response mission. Sweden had long-standing international relations with the affected countries and had contributed \$4.4 million to the response to combat the virus. It was in the

final stages of devising an additional aid package of \$13 million. As Chair of the Peacebuilding Commission's country configuration for Liberia, Sweden would continue contributing to that country's long-term peacebuilding priorities and those of the region.

The representative of the United Republic of Tanzania regretted travel and flight bans to the affected countries. It was vital to foster the socioeconomic development of the affected countries and the region as a whole to enable it to better prevent and address the health-care crisis. He supported the Secretary-General's initiative.

GEORGE WILFRED TALBOT (Guyana) supported the Secretary-General's initiative and a massive scaling up of emergency aid to help control the crisis. Guyana was giving active consideration to an appropriate contribution in the context of the global response.

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