



Statement of the President of the Economic and Social Council on the occasion of the Special Meeting of the Council on “Ebola: A threat to sustainable development”

As President of the Economic and Social Council, I am very pleased with our discussions on Ebola and its implications for sustainable development. The ECOSOC Special Meeting on Ebola has demonstrated how the international community can come together to find solutions to address the multidimensional nature of the Ebola outbreak that threatens millions of the poorest and the most vulnerable.

Firstly, I would like to express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of the Ebola outbreak, and commend the resilience of the people, as well as the tireless efforts of the governments of the affected countries, namely Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Mali. I would also like to express strong support for the efforts of the African Union to contain the Ebola Outbreak.

We heard the devastation the Ebola outbreak caused on the economies and societies of the most affected countries. The Ebola outbreak has halted these countries economic progress and has had a negative impact on sectors beyond health, including agriculture, education, and commerce.

The Council’s intention has been to contribute to the process of defining a concerted, coordinated and comprehensive response to minimize the economic and social impact of the Ebola outbreak. I applaud the measures taken by the organizations and bodies of the United Nations system under the leadership of Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon, embodied in the establishment of the first-ever UN emergency health mission, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER).

As we elaborate on the post-2015 development agenda, the Ebola outbreak is a stark reminder that we need an integrated approach to addressing today’s complex challenges. Our meeting today has shown that responding to a complex health crisis, such as the Ebola outbreak, requires flexible and urgent action by all. While the priority is to stop the outbreak, we must also put in measures to ensure that the emergency Ebola response is linked to longer-term efforts to strengthen health systems. We have to get the response right so that the pledges for the Ebola response can have sustainable impact on the ground and leave behind the foundation for a robust public health system. In our collective action, there is a clear role for Governments, the United Nations system, the international financial institutions, non-governmental organizations, the scientific community, academia, philanthropic organizations, the private sector and the media.

Drawing from our discussions, I am pleased to outline the basic elements that constitute the basis for effective and sustained global action.

Action now

- We must ensure that funding pledges for emergency assistance, whether bilateral or through the United Nations system, are delivered urgently. We urge increased technical

assistance for effective coordination and management of resources be provided to the affected countries.

- We express concern about the low percentage of development aid being disbursed through national systems in the affected countries. We urge development actors to align their assistance with national response plans, working in close partnership with their ministry counterparts. Whenever possible, donors should be responsive to the financial needs defined by the government, including salary support for civil servants and front line health care workers.
- We underline the need to consider debt relief and concessional loans to be provided to all affected countries by the international financial institutions and other creditors. This must extend to other countries that might have new Ebola cases, such as Mali.
- We must stand ready to support the African Union's decision to establish a Center for Disease Control and Prevention in Africa to assist the region in reducing their communicable disease burden, which we should no longer neglect. We must provide the necessary technical assistance and capacity-building to make sure it is equipped with the latest technologies necessary to provide a coordinated response, and to prevent and effectively deal with Ebola and any pandemic in the future.
- We must engage survivors of Ebola, who should be thought of as Ebola heroes, not just survivors. In our response efforts we should make every effort to train and hire them while increasing our efforts to reduce stigmatization in the affected countries.
- The private sector should continue to play an important role in the Ebola response. Liquidity must be provided to small and medium-sized enterprises to keep them in business. The business climate needs to be rebranded to bring more investment to the affected countries. The international corporate sector in the affected countries could play a positive role in the long-term strengthening of the health systems.
- I propose that the United Nations system, under the leadership of the Secretary-General, to conduct a comprehensive study on the economic and social impact of the Ebola outbreak, building on the work being done by the Economic Commission for Africa, the World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme. This study, to be considered by the Council in a follow-up meeting in 2015 could be part of a wider examination of all aspects of the impact of the Ebola outbreak. This study could also be considered by other relevant United Nations bodies.

Initiating medium- to long-term measures

- We must ensure an integrated approach by the UN entities, including the General Assembly, Security Council, the Economic and Social Council and the Peacebuilding Commission in order to strengthen the impact of our actions. The continued support of member states, the UN system, multilateral financial institutions and other partners is crucial in ensuring that the post-conflict peacebuilding efforts achieved so far in the three most affected countries are not reversed.
- We must invest more resources in strengthening national institutions by investing directly through countries' national institutions. Donors must prioritize the strengthening of its public sector, including health, education, sanitation and the economy, so as to safeguard affected countries against future crises. This will allow us to build health systems capable of responding to emergencies and of withstanding shocks such as Ebola.
- We urge all development actors to consider flexible and innovative funding modalities for immediate response to future health and other development-related crises, as well as financing for vaccines and treatments. Mechanisms are needed to direct resources to meet re-defined government strategies.
- We urge the establishment of public-private partnerships to improve access to quality healthcare services in poor-resource setting. This includes support to health institutions in African countries and accelerating drug and vaccine investments for "orphan" diseases. We, including the international scientific and medical research community,

must devote more resources to researching treatments and cures to neglected tropical diseases (NTDs).

- We urge the training and deployment of a new cadre of salaried community health workers, doctors and nurses to the affected countries. The lack of health care professionals in all three of the affected countries is one of the primary reasons that Ebola has gotten out of control. We must invest in both health and social programmes, including building world-class medical and nursing schools linked to robust health systems in West Africa.
- We invite the relevant organizations of the United Nations system to consider ways to promote health systems strengthening in United Nations Development Assistance Frameworks in the affected countries.

For use of the information media; not an official record