

DPC

## AFRO-MEMORANDUM

From: DPC Director

To: RD, AFRO

Date: 25 March 2014

Your ref:

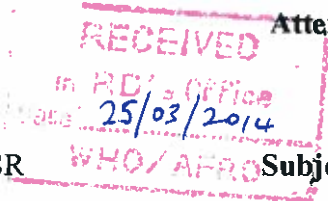
Attention:

Our ref.:

Originator: DSR

Subject:

PROPOSAL TO DECLARE GUINEA EBOLA  
OUTBREAK AS GRADE 2 EMERGENCY



### Background:

The Ministry of Health (MoH) of Guinea has notified WHO of an outbreak of Ebola haemorrhagic fever. As of 24 March 2014, a total of 86 suspected cases including 59 deaths (case fatality ratio 68.7%) had been reported. The reported cases are from four districts, namely Guekedou, Macenta, Nzerekore and Kissidougou. There is evidence that the outbreak is spreading and has also resulted in four deaths among health care providers. Preliminary results from sequencing suggest that the involved strain is Zaire Ebola virus last reported in 2009 in Kasai Province Occidental of DR Congo. This strain is associated with high mortality rates. Reports of suspected cases in border areas of Liberia and Sierra Leone have been received and are being investigated.

The ministries of health of Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia with support from WHO and other partners are implementing a series of preventive and control measures. These include among others reactivation of national and district emergency management committees, enhancement of surveillance, case management, social mobilization and deployment of experts. The necessary supplies and logistics required are also being mobilized.

### Justification:

In light of rapid evolution of the outbreak, high case fatality ratio, and possibility of cross-border transmission, a teleconference was held on 24 March 2014 involving AFRO and HQ Emergency Directors and teams. The participants analysed the situation against the grading criteria of scale, urgency, complexity, context and in addition, the reputational risk, as outlined in the Emergency Response Framework (pages 18-21). The following analysis was done:

Scale:

- The number of suspected cases and deaths is high. Moreover, actual number of cases and deaths is yet to be established;
- Four districts reported suspected cases suggesting continued spread of the Ebola virus;
- There is high possibility of cross-border transmission. There are already reports of suspected cases in border areas of Liberia and Sierra Leone which are being investigated.

Urgency:

- The panic caused by the Ebola outbreak in Guinea and the neighboring countries requires swift interventions to prevent further spread of the virus;
- The high case fatality ratio associated with Ebola Zaire strain and the currently observed case fatality ratio of 68.5% calls for urgent and effective control measures;
- Deaths among health workers suggest nosocomial transmission. It is urgent to strengthen infection prevention and control measures in all the health facilities.

Complexity:

- Ebola epidemics often disrupt the existing health care services. Fear for getting infected in health care settings reduces attendance for almost all health services;
- Specialised technical knowledge and skills supported by strong coordination are required for effective outbreak response;
- The outbreak is likely to affect economic activities such as tourism, trade and movement of people due to the fear of getting infected. The negative impact on economic activities and revenue generation will further compound underlying vulnerabilities across the country.

Context:

- This is the first Ebola/VHF outbreak in Guinea. The country experiences for responding to Ebola are limited and need additional external support;
- All samples from suspected cases are currently shipped abroad for confirmatory tests. This delays clinical decisions and the process of confirmation of outbreaks in new areas;
- Resources to respond to the outbreak remain limited.



Reputational risk:


- As an IHR requirement, WHO works with Member States to reduce the public health risk associated with international disease spread;
- Prompt actions are needed to conduct timely investigation and clearly define the extent of the Ebola outbreak. WHO should be in position to provide more concrete information to the public using the appropriate mechanisms of communication.

Proposal:

It is on the basis of the above analysis that it is proposed to the Regional Director to declare the Ebola Outbreak as an internal WHO Grade 2 emergency, in order to activate the emergency response procedures. Should the Regional Director concur with the above proposal, the following steps will be taken immediately:

- Strengthen the already established WHO emergency management committee at country level with relevant expertise;
- Establish a Regional Emergency Support Team (EST) at WHO AFRO to coordinate WHO technical and operational support to the outbreak response;
- Finalize the deployment of multidisciplinary team of experts to Guinea and ensure that the rotation plan is finalized and updated regularly;
- The Epidemic Management Committee in Guinea with support from AFRO to review and finalise the draft outbreak response plans for immediate implementation, including resource mobilization and application to APHEF;
- Support the Ministry of Health in publishing daily situation reports;
- Strengthen cross-border collaboration on Ebola and other VHF prevention and control specifically among Cote d'Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone;
- Prepare and disseminate to all West African countries regular updates of the Ebola outbreak in Guinea;
- Monitor joint WHO performance standards as outlined in the ERF.

RD's Decision:

Approved.  
  
25.03.14