

Security Council 7268th Meeting 18th September 2014
Open Debate on the Ebola Outbreak in Africa
Briefing by David Nabarro, Senior UN System Coordinator for Ebola¹

Madam President, Your Excellences, Mr Secretary-General of the UN and Madam Director-General of the World Health Organization: thank you very much indeed for the opportunity to brief you today.

1 Since my appointment on August 14th 2014 I have visited the West African region twice. I have offered briefings to the UN Secretary General, the Director General of the World Health Organization (WHO), as well the heads of UN system entities, the World Bank and the African Development Bank on several occasions. I have visited a number of capitals to present my analysis of the situation as well as to encourage an intensified and coordinated response. I have reported on the way in which the outbreak is increasing in an exponential fashion, more than doubling in scale in the four weeks since I was given this responsibility – and on the way in which women are disproportionately affected. I have also reported on the steady increase in the response through the efforts by the governments, under the strong leadership of their Presidents, together with multiple partners and entities of the UN system and the public health guidance of the WHO. But I conclude that if the current rate of increase in response is maintained, the outbreak will continue to accelerate ahead of control efforts and endanger many more countries and peoples.

2 A major scale up in the response is needed now: any delay in intensifying the response and catching up with the outbreak increases the likelihood of longer term societal and economic damage to the affected countries. It increases the potential for the outbreak to spread to other countries, across the African continent and beyond.

3 The required scale-up in the response must be at a level which is profound enough to overtake the outbreak. It must be implemented as quickly as possible. It usually takes between one and two months for a commitment to be reflected in increased action within communities and countries even when all concerned work with the utmost urgency. For that reason I am now requesting a rapid **twenty-fold** scale up in the response in comparison with current levels.

4 Implementing such a scale up will not be at all easy. In his address just now the UN Secretary-General described the response strategy - **Stopping** the outbreak, **Treating** the infected, **Ensuring** access to essential services, **Preserving** stability and **Preventing** outbreaks in countries currently unaffected (**STEPP**). I have identified 13 Mission-Critical actions that must be undertaken at the same time if the strategy is to be implemented at scale and have the required impact. We sometimes refer to it as “bending down the epidemic curve”. Essential services that must be available in affected communities include dependable access to safety nets, to nutritious foods, and to functioning health services, especially the services needed by women and children.

5 To implement 13 actions simultaneously in any emergency response is particularly challenging. In the case of Ebola, a dangerous virus, it is particularly difficult. It requires focus, prioritization and infection-control discipline from all concerned. All forms of medical care for those involved in the response, as well as a

¹ This is the complete text: The statement actually delivered was shortened given the time limit.

capacity for evacuation of those who are severely ill, are critical. Governments have reorganized their systems for effective implementation but much more effort is needed, quickly, and it must be well organized. The UN system can – if properly arrayed – ensure that this will happen.

6 To ensure that the resources provided for the scale-up are used as efficiently as possible, the following coordination elements are required:

- (a) A clear direction to the response – prioritizing support for people, communities and governments so they can respond effectively to the virus and the threats it poses while ending transmission;
- (b) A firm platform that enables all to work effectively and safely;
- (c) A strong strategic back-bone which is evident to all engaged in the response, holding them together in synergy;
- (d) A global coalition that enables all committed to this way of working to be engaged and to work effectively together.

7 I am delighted that since I returned from my most recent visit to Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea four days ago, there have been strong signs of increased commitment. The African Union deployment of civilian and military volunteers from across the continent to the affected countries is starting. Ministers of the European Union met in Brussels on Monday September 15th to reaffirm their commitment to a powerful response and support for the powerful work of the European Commission. France undertook to support the Government of Guinea by constructing an Ebola Treatment Unit in Guinea Forestière. On Tuesday September 16th the UN Emergency Relief Coordinator chaired a meeting in Geneva where many countries indicated their commitment to support the implementation of the 13 Mission Critical Actions. Also on Tuesday September 15th the United States indicated it will dramatically increase support for implementing these actions in Liberia with a major programme of constructing additional Ebola Treatment Units, training of multiple personnel who will work in these units, as well as supporting prevention and care in the community. On Wednesday September 16th the United Kingdom offered to scale up its support the people of Sierra Leone with the construction of many more Ebola Treatment Units. Cuba and China have offered significantly increased support through the provision and a major commitment by the World Bank was announced. Each day other nations are offering to initiate or ramp up their assistance.

8 I am particularly gratified that the UN Secretary-General has, in close cooperation with the Director General of the WHO, moved rapidly to propose a unique international response to this public health emergency – the UN Mission for Emergency Ebola Response (UNMEER). This will create the conditions for a much more rapid and substantial scale up in the response, including better access to health care and other essential services for all people. It will greatly increase the likelihood that different contributions are fully effective, and provide a valuable impulsion to the work of different UN systems agencies in the support of the governments of affected countries. It needs to be implemented as quickly as possible so as to ensure that the people in the affected countries can rapidly overtake the challenges posed by the virus, recover quickly, and return to the path of strong human and economic development.
