



HIGHLIGHTS

- UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon meets with U.S. President Barack Obama on the margins of the UN General Assembly to discuss Ebola among other threats to global security
- The latest WHO Ebola Response Roadmap Update reports 6,263 EVD cases in West Africa, with 2,917 deaths

Key Political and Economic Developments

1. UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon met yesterday with U.S. President Barack Obama on the margins of the 69th session of the UN General Assembly in New York. During this meeting, the Secretary-General expressed his gratitude for the extensive commitments the U.S. has made to the Ebola response, while agreeing on the pressing need for the international community to continue to take immediate and strong steps to defeat the outbreak. In a speech at the UN General Assembly the same day, U.S. President Obama grouped Ebola with the crisis in Ukraine and the threat posed by Islamic State group jihadists in Iraq and Syria as "new dangers" that imperil global security. He further urged a "broader effort to stop a disease that could kill hundreds of thousands, inflict horrific suffering, destabilise economies, and move rapidly across borders." In the Secretary-General's address to the General Assembly entitled "From Turmoil to Peace," he shared his decision to establish UNMEER and underlined the importance of mobilizing a robust global response effort.
2. Also yesterday, the Secretary-General conducted bilateral meetings with the Presidents of Brazil, France, the European Commission and the European Council, and the Prime Minister of Japan, during which they agreed on the need for rapid and specific measures to combat Ebola. The Secretary-General met separately with the King of Spain and the President of Brazil, appealing for their support in responding to the outbreak. In addition, during a meeting with the President Goodluck Jonathan of Nigeria, the Secretary-General commended the President on Nigeria's efforts to contain the spread of Ebola within its borders. Meanwhile, in a separate meeting with the President of Côte d'Ivoire, the Secretary-General noted the significant social, economic and political impact that Ebola is wielding on the region and beyond and assured the President of the United Nations' steadfast support to address the current crisis.
3. While in New York for the General Assembly session, the Ghanaian President, H.E. John Dramani Mahama, told the press yesterday that the work to make Ghana the operational base for the U.S. relief effort in Liberia is ongoing. He dismissed concerns by some medical workers in the affected countries that the presence of U.S. troops might create a public backlash since "any boots on the ground or gloves on the ground...would be helpful because one of the major constraints in the fight against the outbreak is a lack of personnel."
4. Further to the comments of Deputy Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Recovery and Governance in the UN Mission in Liberia (UNMIL) and UN Resident Coordinator / UN Development Programme Resident Representative, Antonio Vigilante, during a press briefing on Tuesday, he also emphasised that the current situation is different from any other crisis in many ways, given that "in contrast to conventional disaster situations which could only improve, the Ebola crisis was still developing and worsening each day."
5. In a series of OCHA essays released to mark six months since the outbreak of EVD in Guinea in March, the WHO Director-General, Dr. Margaret Chan, identified that this crisis highlights six cross-cutting issues including: the dangers of social and economic inequalities; that rumours and panic are spreading faster than the virus which has negative economic repercussions; that when a deadly virus spirals out of control, it becomes a global risk; that decades of neglect of basic health systems render a country vulnerable to shock; that the research and development incentives are virtually non-existent for a disease historically and geographically confined to poor African nations; and, finally, that the world is ill-prepared to respond to any severe, sustained and threatening public health emergency.
6. Yesterday, the Secretary-General of the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies (IFRC) urged "the international community to immediately deploy the resources – including

financial, material and personnel – needed ... at a scale which reflects the magnitude of the challenges we face.” IFRC response teams are active in Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria, while preparedness activities are taking place in ten other countries in the region.

7. The National Elections Commission (NEC) of Liberia issued a press release in which the NEC Chairman confirmed that he had written to the nation’s President, the Senate and House of Representatives recommending the postponement of the 14 October senatorial elections. The Chairman explained that, under the current circumstances with the Ebola outbreak, the Commission could not conduct a free, fair, transparent and credible election, and the NEC would neither be able to deploy nor train personnel, nor guarantee the security of election materials to be delivered from outside Liberia. However, the NEC is consulting with the Legislature on the possibility of conducting the election before the end of the Senators’ terms in January 2015.

Human Rights

8. Concerns are being raised by UNICEF in Sierra Leone of a high risk of increased vulnerability of children to abandonment, neglect, violence, exploitation and abuse. With schools continuing to be closed across the country, children are reportedly engaging in child labour. Social stigma and isolation for affected children is also considerable, especially those quarantined. Furthermore, the potential for family separation is heightened owing to the fact that people are being quarantined or treated for extended periods in medical centers.
9. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) published yesterday a Gender Alert outlining key principles and action points to be taken into account in any Ebola response plan. The Alert underscores how women in particular are at greater risk of exposure to the disease given that they more frequently tend to be the majority of frontline health workers and caretakers for ill family members. Similarly, in the West African context, women are often traditionally tasked with preparing dead-bodies for burial representing a risk of transmission in the process. In its statement, the IASC outlines a series of key action points needed to ensure that messaging as well the delivery of essential services is gender-sensitive. Also important is the need to ensure equal participation of men and women in the planning and implementation of the response, as well as the need to better collect and report gender-disaggregated data on the outbreak.

Medical

10. According to the latest WHO Ebola Response Roadmap Update, the total number of EVD cases in West Africa is 6,263, with 2,917 deaths as of 21 September. In Guinea, the overall situation remains stable, with between 3 to 15 newly reported cases per week in Conakry. Liberia reported a fall in new cases and, most notably, no new confirmed cases from Monrovia, but suggests that there has been a large number of suspected new cases reported across the country over the past week. However, WHO cautions that it is very likely that a substantial proportion of the suspected cases are genuine cases of EVD, and that the reported fall in confirmed cases reflects delays in matching laboratory results with clinical surveillance data. Meanwhile, in Sierra Leone, WHO confirms that the situation continues to deteriorate nationwide, driven by a sharp increase in the number of newly reported cases in Freetown and neighbouring districts. WHO notes, however, that cases and deaths found during the three-day house-to-house Ebola sensitisation campaign, which ended on 21 September, are not yet included in official data.
11. Regarding the statistics of healthcare workers infected with EVD, WHO reported an increase in figures, reaching a total of 373 cases and 208 deaths. Although any additional cases of EVD in healthcare workers are of great concern, WHO has explained that this sharp increase again reflects the integration of the results of the retrospective investigation into the official national data and that there is currently no evidence to suggest a recent increase in the incidence of infections of healthcare workers.
12. The Nigerian Federal Health Ministry announced to the press yesterday that all patients under surveillance for EVD in Nigeria have been released, “after completing their mandatory 21-day period stipulated by the WHO.” However, according to WHO, 42 days (the total of two incubation periods) must elapse before a country can be declared free of the disease. The last new case of EVD in Nigeria was reported on 8 September.
13. Following yesterday’s release of the U.S. Centres for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) report which predicts an exponential increase in EVD infections in Liberia and Sierra Leone unless the global response is scaled up, the Liberian Government has welcomed the study which Information Minister, Lewis Brown, suggested not only provides a “means by which we can predict and calculate the progress we are making” but will also enable his Government “to make a case to the world for much needed international support and assistance.”

Logistics

14. Despite the opening of a new ETU Island Clinic last week in Monrovia and an additional tented ETU in Bong County, not to mention continuing efforts to expedite the construction of additional ETUs, WHO underscores that there are still significant gaps in bed capacity in Liberia and Sierra Leone, as of 21 September.

Country	Existing Bed capacity	Beds to be set-up by an identified partner	Additional beds needed without a partner identified
Guinea	180	0	40
Liberia	315	440	1550
Nigeria	66	0	0
Senegal	9	0	0
Sierra Leone	323	297	532
Total	893	737	2122

15. WHO has advised that the mobile laboratory in Freetown is in the process of increasing its testing capacity to 100 tests per day. Increasing demand for testing in Sierra Leone's Bombali area will be addressed by the deployment of additional laboratory support. In Liberia, additional support for the three mobile laboratories operating throughout the country will be provided by a U.S. Navy laboratory and the deployment of two further mobile units, which are due to be operational by the end of September.

Outreach and Education

16. UNICEF, as lead of the social mobilisation pillar of the Ebola response, continues to increase its community sensitisation activities and distribution of health and hygiene supplies to public hospitals in Guinea. It is also supplying vehicles to the Guinean Ministry of Health which are being used for the transportation of bodies for safe burial and contact tracing, in addition to supporting social mobilisation efforts.
17. Meanwhile in Liberia, UNICEF is providing a variety of types of support, ranging from training on Ebola awareness and outreach for healthcare workers, social workers and education staff, to the provision of 18 water tanks of 5,000 litre capacity to the Liberian Ministry of Health and Social Welfare (MoHSW) for the site of a new ETU.

Security

18. Further to last week's reports of the murder of an eight-member Ebola awareness team attacked by locals in south-eastern Guinea, media indicated yesterday that police have arrested 27 suspects over the murders and they are being questioned in the city of Nzérékoré. Meanwhile, UNICEF noted in its latest report that resistance in rural communities continues to radicalise in villages in the Forest Region of Guinea, the country's epicentre of the crisis, where the team was attacked.

Resource Mobilisation

19. Last week, the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) donated USD 5 million to the Government of Liberia to pay approximately 3,500 civil service health workers for the next five months. This funding is part of the USD 75 million support package that the US announced on 4 September to contribute to the fight against EVD.
20. In addition to global donations for the fight against Ebola, the Government of Sierra Leone continues to receive bilateral contributions from international donors, including USD 30,000 from the Nigerian High Commission for Ebola sensitisation in schools, and from national actors and individuals.

Essential Services

21. The UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) recently expressed concerns over the crippling impact the Ebola outbreak is having on agriculture and livelihoods in northern Liberia, with many women in particular unable to pay their debts due to the loss of income. In response to these critical needs, FAO's immediate plans in Liberia are to revive local food security and household incomes through assistance that will include conditional cash transfers, revitalisation of savings and loans schemes, increased food and seed production during the dry season in lowlands, and agro processing.