

AMRO: REGIONAL STATEMENT

EB SPECIAL SESSION ON EBOLA

25 JANUARY 2015

Thank you Mr Chair,

1. The Region of the Americas wishes to thank the Director General, for convening this important and timely EB Special Session to discuss and analyse the 2014 EVD outbreak. This unprecedented challenge has demanded the international community's full engagement for the best part of 2014 and it is critical that we all continue to engage, commit and adapt to further action. We have followed, and greatly appreciated, the briefings that the WHO has duly arranged on preparedness and response to the Ebola outbreak and we remain attentive to recent developments in regards to potential interventions, therapeutics and vaccines.
2. As a Region, we consider that it is our ethical responsibility to respond to this on-going emergency in a two-fold manner. On one hand, it is our duty to sustain with renewed commitment and focus our international cooperation efforts in the comprehensive response to the outbreak in West Africa. Up until now, we have done so to the best of our capacities, with countries of the Americas contributing with medical, human, financial, and technical resources. We continue on the search for innovative and renewed ways to be part of the overall global coordinated response to this pressing matter, including through the development of vaccines and medical counter measures.
3. On the other hand, we have also taken on the challenge of strengthening, harmonizing and coordinating our regional and national preparedness capacities to respond in a timely and effective manner to a possible introduction of the Ebola virus disease. In this endeavour, countries have resorted to the technical tools that the WHO has produced in the previous months, most notably the WHO consolidated Ebola virus disease preparedness checklist. In this same vein, the Region reiterates the need for the preparation and training of the population and the communities to better face outbreaks of emerging and re-emerging diseases.
4. The efforts of the States of the American Region and the Pan American Health Organization have been greatly instrumental at the regional level. Briefings, seminars, workshops and country visits have been conducted, and National Plans have been drafted. But we are not oblivious to the pending challenges that we have in the Region, such as full regional implementation of the WHO's International Health

regulations (IHR), further strengthening of health systems, prioritization of the epidemiological vigilance and preparedness capacity , adequate resourcing and training of comprehensive and coordinated medical response teams.

Mr Chair,

5. We are aware that true preparedness does not stem solely from contingency plans but needs to be firmly imbedded in robust national health systems, a trained health workforce, and a supportive network of regional and global partners, capable of coordinating efforts and channelling sufficient resources to act timely in the event of an outbreak of a scale similar to Ebola. Thus it is important that we undertake a candid exercise of reflecting upon the lessons learnt and that we make long-term decisions leading to a reinforced capacity at all three levels of WHO operation.
6. This is clearly an opportunity to further cooperate and collaborate, among ourselves and with others, in harmonizing preparedness and response capacities and strategies across regions, for the short and long term benefit of all, particularly the most vulnerable. And this is also certainly an opportunity to urgently re-define and address priorities for strengthening health systems through a sustainable and equitable approach, especially in those countries where health systems are weak or have been long-neglected. WHO must sustain and strengthen its leadership and coordinating roles in these areas, while stimulating the necessary multi-stakeholder and multisectorial cooperation and commitment. The AMRO delegations support this process and we will contribute towards achieving a successful outcome.