



TEXTS ADOPTED

P8_TA(2014)0026

EU response to the Ebola outbreak

European Parliament resolution of 18 September 2014 on the EU's response to the Ebola outbreak (2014/2842(RSP))

The European Parliament,

- having regard to the ‘public health emergency of international concern’ announcement by the World Health Organisation (WHO) of 8 August 2014,
- having regard to the WHO Ebola response roadmap of 28 August 2014,
- having regard to the European Union Foreign Affairs Council conclusions on the Ebola crisis in West Africa of 15 August 2014,
- having regard to the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control’s Ebola risk assessment of 27 August 2014,
- having regard to the ‘Statement on the Ebola outbreak’ in West Africa by the Commissioner for Health, Tonio Borg, of 8 August 2014,
- having regard to the ‘Statement on the EU’s response to the Ebola outbreak’ by the Commissioner for Development, Andris Piebalgs, and the Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Response, Kristalina Georgieva, of 5 September 2014,
- having regard to the European Commission’s High Level Event to coordinate the response to the Ebola Outbreak in West Africa of 15 September 2014,
- having regard to the African Union (AU) mission ‘AU Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa’ (ASEOWA) established on 21 August 2014,
- having regard to the United Nations ‘Special Briefing on Ebola’ by Dr Joanne Liu, international president of *Médecins Sans Frontières*, of 2 September 2014,
- having regard to the statement made by Liberia’s Defence Minister, Brownie Samukai, before the UN Security Council on the threat to his country’s existence posed by the outbreak of Ebola,

- having regard to the UN Security Council meeting of 18 September 2014 where the Ebola crisis will top the agenda,
 - having regard to Rule 123(2) and (4) of its Rules of Procedure,
- A. whereas the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD), formerly known as Ebola haemorrhagic fever, is a severe, often fatal illness in humans;
 - B. whereas since the Ebola outbreak was officially declared on 22 March 2014 in Guinea, it has reached four other countries (Liberia, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Senegal), has affected almost 4 000 people and has caused more than 2 000 deaths, and bearing in mind that there are also unreported cases of Ebola-infected persons and deaths;
 - C. whereas the epidemic is fast accelerating and spreading in the West Africa region, although a separate outbreak of the virus is also occurring in the Democratic Republic of Congo;
 - D. whereas the WHO recognises that the outbreak had been underestimated and estimates that the number of patients could exceed 20 000 over the next 3 months;
 - E. whereas the WHO has announced that this is the largest recorded outbreak in terms of cases, deaths and geographical coverage, and has declared the crisis to be a ‘public health emergency of international concern’ which demands a coordinated international response;
 - F. whereas there are 4,5 million children under the age of five living in areas affected by the Ebola virus, and women (accounting for 75 % of cases) have been disproportionately affected by the virus because of their role as caregivers;
 - G. whereas the WHO roadmap lists a series of highly concrete and immediate measures aimed at stopping ongoing Ebola transmission worldwide within six to nine months, while also rapidly managing the consequences of any further international spread and recognising the need to address, in parallel, the outbreak’s broader socio-economic impact;
 - H. whereas the NGOs most active on the ground, such as *Médecins Sans Frontières* and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, are criticising the international effort as being dangerously inadequate, since highly limited capacities on the ground are resulting in critical gaps in all aspects of the response: medical supportive care, training of health staff, infection control, contact tracing, epidemiological surveillance, alert and referral systems, community education and mobilisation;
 - I. whereas the European Commission’s Development Cooperation department (DG DEVCO) and Humanitarian Aid and Civil Protection department (DG ECHO) have pledged more than EUR 147 million in humanitarian and development aid in order to contain the spread of the virus, provide treatment and essential equipment to infected persons and deploy humanitarian experts;
 - J. whereas only EUR 11,9 million out of the EUR 147 million pledged specifically address some of the most urgent humanitarian needs;
 - K. whereas all partner organisations on the ground have stressed the fact that in order to isolate and treat patients there is an urgent need not only for funds but also for operational capacity, including qualified human resources and logistic materials;

- L. whereas the Commission monitors the situation through its Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), which should serve as a platform for the coordination of EU assistance;
 - M. whereas EU humanitarian experts have been deployed in the region to monitor the situation and liaise with partner organisations and local authorities;
 - N. whereas EU Member States have the capacity to mobilise immediate response teams to ensure early diagnosis, isolation (of suspected cases and confirmed cases in different wards), monitoring of contact persons and tracing of transmission chains, measures for burials, education and local support;
 - O. whereas affected countries already suffer from shortages of food and clean water and economic collapse caused by the disruption of trade, commercial flights and harvest work following the outbreak of the epidemic, leading to social unrest, fleeing, chaos, threats to public order and further spreading of the virus;
 - P. whereas the outbreak has revealed the serious inadequacy of the health systems of the affected countries and the urgent need for support to strengthen them;
1. Deplores the loss of lives in the region devastated by the Ebola outbreak and expresses its sincere condolences to the governments of the countries and people affected by the outbreak;
 2. Considers that the international community must play a greater role while African countries must also take their share of responsibility, as the Ebola outbreak poses a global security challenge and is not only a West African problem but rather a problem on a global scale;
 3. Calls upon the Commission to intensify efforts and coordinate actions with the United Nations to combat the Ebola virus outbreak; asks the UN Security Council, together with the affected partner countries, to look into the possibility of using military and civil defence assets under the leadership of the Secretary-General and coordinated by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs;
 4. Welcomes and encourages the ongoing scaling-up of the European Commission's financial commitment in terms of humanitarian and development aid to respond to the crisis and especially its support for the African Union ASEOWA mission;
 5. Congratulates the work done on the ground by partner organisations despite the challenges and warmly welcomes their great input and help to control this outbreak;
 6. Reminds Member States that the financial aid provided to the affected countries should not be at the expense of long-term development aid but, rather, complementary;
 7. Regrets the underestimation of the crisis by the international community and the delay in providing any adequate coordinated strategy;
 8. Welcomes the commitments made by the Member States at the European Commission's High Level Event of 15 September 2014, and urges the Council of the European Union to hold a ministerial meeting to establish an emergency plan to mobilise a medical response to agree and provide humanitarian aid from the Member States, under the coordination of the Commission;

9. Calls on the Commission to draw up needs assessments and country-specific plans to determine and coordinate the demand for, and deployment of, qualified health personnel, mobile laboratories, laboratory equipment, protective clothing and treatment centres with isolation wards;
10. Calls on the Member States to coordinate flights and establish dedicated air bridges to move health personnel and equipment to the affected countries and the region, and to provide medical evacuation if necessary;
11. Stresses the need to strengthen scientific collaboration and technological support in the areas affected by this outbreak, with a view to setting up clinical, epidemiological and diagnostic infrastructures, including sustainable infrastructures and surveillance, and paying particular attention to the engagement of local staff, including training;
12. Calls on the Commission, through the ERCC, to maintain close contacts with the ECDC, the WHO and Member States via the Committee on Health Security;
13. Calls on the Commission to put in place control systems to ensure that the entire budget allocated to stopping the Ebola outbreak is actually used to fight the epidemic in the countries affected by the virus and not for other purposes;
14. Considers the WHO Ebola response roadmap to be a basis for priority activities, notably the differentiated response for countries with widespread transmission, initial cases and neighbouring countries in which preparedness has to be strengthened;
15. Welcomes discussions on how UN peacekeeping efforts can – with appropriate training – further support the fight against Ebola in the region;
16. Calls on the Council and Commission to support and encourage the African Union with regard to the need for a holistic action plan, as the situation is continuing to deteriorate rapidly and is affecting the economy as well as public order in the countries concerned, as the Ebola crisis has become complex, with political, security, economic and social implications that will continue to affect the region well beyond the current medical emergency;
17. Stresses that the current crisis cannot be solved by health systems alone, but that a concerted approach involving different sectors (healthcare, education and training, sanitation, food aid) is needed to address the critical gaps in all essential services;
18. Believes that local medical staff must be involved in treating the affected population and should liaise between the population and the international medical staff;
19. Calls for educational and informative action to raise awareness of symptoms and preventive measures in order to facilitate trust and popular cooperation with anti-Ebola measures, as information and communication constitute an important aspect of the fight against the Ebola outbreak;
20. Stresses that the fight against Ebola must not lead to stigmatisation of survivor patients in communities or countries;
21. Calls on Member States to carry out scrupulous infection control and, in cooperation with the ECDC, provide fuller information to the public on the risks;

22. Calls on the Member States and the Commission to coordinate and strengthen medical research and the production of efficient medicines and vaccines against Ebola, and to advance the necessary clinical trials for existing candidate treatments;
23. Calls also for a clear distinction to be made between Ebola vaccination tests and the treatment provided to Ebola-infected persons; calls for clinical trials of the Ebola vaccine to respect the relevant WHO rules in force;
24. Asks its Committee on Development to provide in-depth recommendations for mitigating the long-term consequences of the epidemic and strengthening the health systems of the affected countries in order to avoid similar outbreaks;
25. Instructs its President to forward this resolution to the Council, the Commission, the Vice-President of the Commission / High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, the governments and parliaments of the Member States, the governments and parliaments of the African Union, the UN Secretary-General and the World Health Organisation.