



THE SECRETARY-GENERAL

17 February 2015

Dear Dr. Chan,

I am writing in connection with the emergency response to the West African Ebola Virus Disease outbreak. As you are aware, today we face a critical turning point in the outbreak and in our response effort. The year 2015 has seen an overall decline in the number of new cases of Ebola in the three affected countries. Liberia, once the worst affected country with several hundred cases per week, has been steadily reporting fewer than five cases per week for the past month, all isolated to one county.

While overall figures remain much lower than what we saw in 2014, both Guinea and Sierra Leone have seen an increase in cases in recent weeks, reminding us that setbacks can quickly follow apparent gains. This highlights the need for constant vigilance and to ensure that active surveillance continues, even in unaffected areas.

In order to get the situation further under control ahead of the impending rainy season, when the rains may lead to an increase in other diseases and impede access for responders, the United Nations system, through the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, is mobilizing surge efforts in both Guinea and Sierra Leone.

The next few months are some of the most critical for the response. If communities cease being vigilant and stop conducting active surveillance, donors turn too abruptly to other priorities and the Ebola response is abandoned too soon, there is a risk that flare-ups – especially during the rainy season – could cause the situation to worsen again.

An essential part of this critical and time-bound effort is the need to strengthen the case-finding and epidemiology capacity in the Ebola-affected countries with experts who can make an immediate difference. In this regard, I seek your leadership in ensuring that the World Health Organization resources at hand, not only at headquarters but in all regions, be urgently deployed.

Dr. Margaret Chan
Director-General
World Health Organization
Geneva

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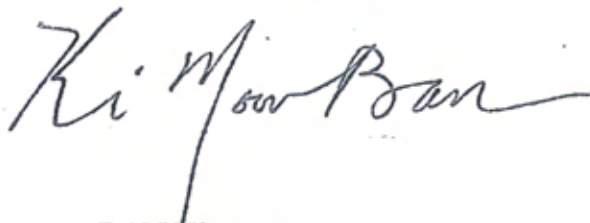
In line with the district-by-district approach and in order to ensure that the appropriate numbers of staff are present at the district level at this crucial point in time, it is my assumption that we would require approximately 100 staff members to be in place and to support the efforts in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia.

Achieving the goal of zero cases will require continued support and engagement by the global community. The current phase of the response, focused on ending the lines of transmission in every district, will have additional resource implications. As such, in addition to the critical need to reinforce the numbers of epidemiologists in the most affected countries, it is also equally important to have good district level coordinators to manage this process.

More than financial resources, the response still needs qualified and experienced staff for critical roles in epidemiology, as well as in infection prevention and control. As the focus of the response switches to early detection and rapid response at the district level, we need qualified field staff, based on the ground, to carry out core response tasks and train national health personnel to build local capacity. This will not only be crucial in achieving the goal of zero cases, but also to strengthen the local health systems after the end of the Ebola crisis.

I know that I can count on your continued leadership and support.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ki Moon Ban". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Ki" and last name "Ban" being more prominent than the middle name "Moon".

BAN Ki-moon

