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Mission for Ebola Emergency Response

Thank you Honorable Ministers for health, communications and transportation, the UN Resident Coordinator, the Senior Adviser to the Mission

My name is Tony Banbury and I am the Special Representative to the UN Secretary General and I am the Head of UN mission for Ebola Emergency Response.

The situation that Ebola has created is very grave. It is more than just a public health crisis, it has become a multi-dimensional crisis with serious risks affecting the health, economic, political, humanitarian spheres.

The rate of infections is growing exponentially. The total number of cases is doubling every three weeks. The number of deaths now is greater from this outbreak than in all previous Ebola outbreaks in the history of the world. The world has recognized the risk to the people of the three affected countries, the sub-region, the continent and the world.

The UN Security Council passed a resolution about a week ago that found Ebola represents a threat to international peace and security. 134 governments supported it, more than any other resolution in history. The following day, the UN General Assembly approved the intention to establish this mission.

The Secretary General then about a week later hosted a high-level meeting with senior global leaders talking about how the world needs to work together to stop the disease where it is and to keep it from expanding further. That can only happen through the international coalition.

No single state can stop this outbreak. We need an international effort. The UN Secretary General paid tribute to Ghana for being the standard for the rest of the world and the standard for what all world leaders need to do to stop the outbreak.

The airbridge established here in Ghana is vital to the effort to stop Ebola. This is how we move in supplies for the response. The President's agreement to host the headquarters of the mission provides a capability for the UN to launch this mission. We are grateful to the President for his support to his mission and his support to the UN.

The mission now has one job to stop Ebola. Stop it from spreading. When done this mission will close up. Until then we have a major job to work together to stop it where it is and prevent it from spreading elsewhere.

We will have a small, light headquarters here to support the main operations in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. That is where our main activities will be. There will not be actual operations here, just the headquarters.

Normally when a mission is in a country it usually means problems are happening in the country. It is the opposite here. The fact that this Mission is here shows the strength of Ghana, the hospital is well functioning, the economy is good, the society is strong.

Our mission will work on establishing operational capacities in the countries concerned. Providing vehicles for transportation, supplies for the health workers, and other needs identified by the national governments.

Where there are gaps in their plan, we will work with partners to make sure someone is filling those gaps to stop the spread of Ebola as soon as possible. I am traveling to Liberia tomorrow for two days then to Sierra Leone and Guinea to hear how we can best assist them.

The number one priority is keeping our staff healthy and making sure no one else is at risk of catching Ebola. The WHO is part of this mission and they are putting together strict protocols for how we act and travel and the precautions we take. These standards will be higher than for normal travelers such as business people and tourists.

I went through controls at airport yesterday. It was very impressive and I was glad to see the vigilance. UNMEER will have an even higher standard. When our staff travel to Ghana or any other country, we will have in place these high standards, working with the Minister of Health and taking any advice he has on the standards to advise.

I am very confident that UNMEER will not pose any risk or danger to Ghana. On the contrary, if UNMEER were not here then there would be greater risk to the people of Ghana or other countries around the world. If UNMEER was not here, that is where the risk would occur. If the world sat back and watched we would have more consequences.

We want to express gratitude to the Government of Ghana and pledge that we will be very good guests and even though the hospitality of the people and the country are great, I am hopeful we will be able to stop the Ebola crises very soon and will be able to go back to what we were doing before.