**IASC PRINCIPALS AD HOC MEETING**

**EBOLA OUTBREAK IN WEST AFRICA**

 **Final Summary and Action Points**

19 September 2014

The IASC Principals met to discuss the Ebola outbreak in West Africa following the Secretary-General’s proposal and Security Council resolution 2177 establishing a health mission (UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response) to work with other actors to stop the spread of ebola. WHO Director-General (Margaret Chan) gave an update on the epidemic. The Senior UN System Coordinator for Ebola (David Nabarro) and the Ebola Crisis Manager (Tony Banbury) briefed on the strategy and operational concept for the effort. This was followed by a discussion with IASC colleagues.

There was collective recognition that this is an unprecedented crisis which is out of control and requires a new mechanism to mobilize and coordinate massive inputs from the international community. The key elements were coordination and flexibility in response efforts.

**1. A Disease Spreading at an Exponential Rate**

* More than 5000 have been infected and 50 per cent have died. Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone are the most affected countries.
* The situation in Senegal and Nigeria has been stabilized through robust efforts. The separate outbreak in the DRC is under control.
* In the three most affected countries, the number of cases is increasing at an exponential rate, doubling every 3-4 weeks.
* The disease is extremely contagious and staff will need to exercise discipline to minimise the risk to themselves and others.

**2. Ebola Response Scale Up**

* The epidemic has economic, social, political, humanitarian and security implications.
* The ebola response strategy proposes 12 critical actions to cap the outbreak. It requires a 20-fold scale up of what is in place now.
* The role of the Senior Coordinator is to provide strategic direction to the overall effort and mobilise UN, NGOs and bilateral donors around a joint strategy.
* The role of the ebola crisis manager is to establish the mission.
* The mission will be the backbone of the effort, an operating platform with logistical support and infection control.
* 134 countries co-sponsored the Security Council resolution and many have agreed to support the mission. This is required as UN and NGO partners do not have adequate capacity.

**3. Health Mission: Breaking the Mold**

* Key principles are speed of action, impact, safety of staff and support to national government plans developed in line with WHO’s protocols. A letter from the Secretary-General to the Security Council and General Assembly describe the mission in more detail.
* An advance team will deploy early next week and the rest of the mission will follow.
* The mission will focus on filling gaps. It will provide logistical assets, in particular transport and treatment centres. The idea is to break the mold with the mission in terms of how UN assets and resources are used.
* There will be no security dimension to the mission. It is a health-keepers mission. However, security of UN, NGO partners is an important issue, as is civil disorder.
* There should be no sensitivities around balancing a humanitarian and peacekeeping/political agenda given the nature of UNMEER.
* Dr. Chan will appoint a senior health officer to the mission to oversee all technical health aspects of the response.

**4. Coordination**

**Many questions/issues were raised:**

* How to balance central command with decentralisation?
* How to ensure that new coordination structures are fit for purpose, fill gaps and avoid duplication with existing structures?
* Civil-military interface will be important given deployment of military personnel by several countries.
* How can NGO capacity, both local and international, be mobilised to contribute to the overall effort?
* How best to support community leaders?
* Essential for mission and agencies to work as one.
* Need clarity as to which programmes assets need to be redirected toward ebola response and which programmes need to continue.
* Possibility of agencies embedding themselves in the mission or using it as an “overcoat”.

These issues will be addressed by the UN System Coordinator for Ebola and the Ebola Crisis Manager in their ongoing planning.

**5. Preserving Stability, Development and Existing Programmes**

* The ultimate goal is to preserve the stability of the countries and manage the risk to existing programmes.
* Finding alternative ways to deliver education in countries where schools are closed is crucial.
* The UN Ebola Crisis Centre is producing a daily situation report.

***Action point:***

1. *ERC agreed to work with the mission and NGO colleagues to ensure that NGO colleagues are kept informed of developments.* ***Action by:*** *ERC.*

*Circulated by the IASC secretariat on 24 September 2014*