



**MINISTRY OF HEALTH**

**MINISTERIAL STATEMENT ON  
ZAMBIA'S PREPAREDNESS FOR THE  
EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE OUTBREAK**

**Presented to the National Assembly  
by  
Hon. Joseph Kasonde MP,  
Minister of Health  
on  
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**Mr. Speaker,** thank you very much for granting me the opportunity to update the house and through you the public on our preparedness as a nation for the prevention and possible management of the Ebola Virus Disease.

**Mr. Speaker,** Ebola is a haemorrhagic viral disease with 50-90 percent case fatality. The current Ebola outbreak started in Guinea in December 2013 and spread to Sierra Leone and Liberia. It has now also involved Nigeria and Senegal. This is the largest Ebola outbreak ever recorded, both in magnitude and in geographical spread. By 7th September 2014, a total of 4366 cases and 2218 deaths (Case Fatality Rate- 50.8%) had been reported from Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia. Further, twenty-one cases and eight deaths had been reported in Nigeria, while Senegal has so far recorded only one case imported from Guinea.

**Mr. Speaker,** the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) has reported a more localized Ebola outbreak that is epidemiologically unrelated to the West African Epidemic. 62 cases and 35 deaths (Case Fatality Rate- 56.4%) had been reported by 7<sup>th</sup> September 2014.

**Mr. Speaker,** the Ebola Virus disease outbreak has been spreading rapidly across both rural and urban areas of the affected West African countries with over half of the victims dying of the disease. This outbreak has also been characterized by an unusually high mortality rate among health care workers. In many instances, health care workers have become infected in the course of attending to cases before the cases are diagnosed or confirmed. The Ebola Virus disease outbreak is still on the rise, with approximately 48% of the total number of cases having been reported in the last 30 days.

**Mr. Speaker,** from the situation I have given above it is evident that Zambia is at risk of importation of Ebola from the affected countries. This is particularly true in view of the ease of modern travel and the extent of the outbreak. The Government has

therefore taken the following measures to minimize the risk of the importation of Ebola into the country and to promptly detect and respond to any suspected cases:

- (i) An appropriate legal framework has been put in place through Statutory Instrument No. 49 of 2014. This Statutory Instrument adds Ebola Virus Disease to the list of Notifiable Infectious and Epidemic diseases in the country thus providing a legal framework for the notification of Ebola Virus Disease;
- (ii) In March 2014, the Ministry of Health commenced sensitization of all the Provincial Health Offices and the major Points of Entry and this activity is on-going;
- (iii) The National Epidemic Preparedness Prevention Management and Control Committee has put Ebola top of its agenda. A national rapid response team has been constituted comprising all the key stakeholders. Provincial and District Rapid Response Teams are on high alert. It should be appreciated that, Epidemic Preparedness and Response is not the sole responsibility of the Ministry of Health. Effective epidemic preparedness requires a whole of Government approach. It is for this reason that The Disaster Management and Mitigation Unit (DMMU) in the office of the Vice President has been coordinating Ebola preparedness;
- (iv) Multi-sectoral meetings, chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet with representation from all Government Ministries at Permanent Secretary Level are held weekly. At the initial meeting, the specific roles and responsibilities of each Ministry in Ebola preparedness were identified. Subsequent meetings have provided a platform for the Ministry of Health to provide updates on the Ebola situation in West Africa and for the various Ministries to share progress on their mandated responsibilities.

- (v) A comprehensive Ebola Virus Disease Epidemic Preparedness and Response plan with an estimated budget of ZMK 106, 142,459.00 has been prepared. This covers disease surveillance, Port Health, Case management, community sensitization isolation and quarantine facilities as well as Laboratory capacity.
- (vi) The Ministry issued a travel advisory in which we provided guidance to travellers coming from Ebola- affected countries to Zambia and to those travelling from Zambia to these countries. We are rigorously screening travellers from the affected countries to ascertain their level of risk. Travellers found to be at significant risk of Ebola Virus Disease infection are being quarantined and followed up to determine whether they develop symptoms or not.
- (vii) Two infra-red thermal scanners have been set up at the Kenneth Kaunda and Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe International Airports and are currently in use. In addition all the four international airports and Mwami, Kasumbalesa, Nakonde, Mpulungu, Nchelenge and Katima Mulilo borders have all been equipped with hand-held thermal scanners.
- (viii) The Ministry of Health has procured Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) including N-95 respirators and tyvec suits and distributed these to the provinces. I also wish to commend the World Health Organization (WHO) for their timely donation of additional PPE to my Ministry. This has further strengthened our preparedness.
- (ix) All hospitals in the provinces are holding regular clinical meetings on Ebola to raise awareness among the care providers. We have also stationed ambulances in the Provinces to facilitate movement of suspected cases to isolation facilities

- (x) A massive sensitization campaign using electronic and print media and community meetings have been embarked on to sensitise the public on Ebola Virus Disease.

**Mr. Speaker,** on the international front, Zambia has continued to participate in meetings convened by the African UNION (AU) *and* (SADC) to review the regional response to Ebola Virus Disease and harmonise country approaches to the threat. We have also been actively involved in other regional meetings and trainings, all targeted at strengthening our capacity to respond to this disease.

**Mr. Speaker,** in conclusion, I wish to state that, no case of Ebola has been recorded in Zambia so far. I would also like to state that Zambia has in-country capacity to test for Ebola Virus Disease at the University of Zambia, School of Veterinary Medicine and we are also building up the capacity of the Virology Laboratory at the University Teaching Hospital to test specimens for Ebola. Our surveillance system has detected a number of suspected cases or rumours. So far seven specimens have been subjected to laboratory testing and these have all tested negative for Ebola virus.

Mr. Speaker, at this point, I wish to assure the nation that the Government is doing everything possible to prevent the importation of Ebola into the country. We have a system in place to detect and rapidly respond to any possible cases. Above all, we have a sensitive and sensitised community capable of responding firmly to the threat.

**Mr. Speaker, I thank you.**