

THURSDAY, 20 SEPTEMBER, 2018

MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

ON THE

PREPAREDNESS ON EBOLA AND CHOLERA DISEASES

BY THE

HON. MINISTER OF HEALTH (DR CHILUFYA)

Mr Speaker, I thank you for granting me this opportunity to update the House and through it the nation on the measures undertaken to avoid the importation of Ebola Virus Disease and Cholera from the ongoing outbreaks in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) and Zimbabwe, respectively.

Mr Speak I begin by reiterating the importance of the health security agenda in Zambia both at national and global level. The 2014 Ebola outbreak in West Africa and the 2017/2018 cholera outbreaks in Zambia and other countries within the region are enough reason to escalate health security to ensure preparedness and prevention measures are implemented to avoid the repetition of such occurrences.

Mr Speaker, from the onset, I should state that Zambia has not recorded any case of Ebola Virus Disease or Cholera. Let me begin with the update on the Ebola Virus Disease. The Ebola Virus Disease outbreak in the DRC broke out about a month ago and as at 11th September, 2018, 132 people have been diagnosed with the disease and 92 deaths have been recorded.

Mr Speaker, Zambia being close to the DRC with porous borders and with an influx of persons seeking refuge and health services on the Zambian side has escalated disease intelligence and surveillance activities to ensure public health security.

Mr Speaker, I wish to share with hon. Members of the House and the nation at large measures instituted to ensure the safety in the community in Zambia:

- (a) a multi-sectoral committee of Permanent Secretaries chaired by the Secretary to the Cabinet has been activated and is meeting weekly since 13th September, 2018;

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- (b) the Public Health Emergency Operation Centre (PHEOC) at our health intelligence wing, the Zambia National Public Health Institute (ZNPFI) is on high alert;
- (c) all provincial and district epidemic preparedness committees have been activated;
- (d) all the districts that are close to the borders of the DRC have had training of seven member district rapid response teams and these include Northern, Luapula, North-Western and Copperbelt provinces. We will be training Lusaka and Central Provinces in the next week. Ultimately, all districts in the country will be trained before the end of the year.
- (e) the ZNPFI continues to coordinate cross border meetings with the DRC;
- (f) a high level delegation in the Ministry of Health from national, provincial and district level supported by top leadership of the World Health Organisation (who) toured the points of entry including the Simon Mwansa Kapwepwe Airport on the Copperbelt to assess the levels of preparedness;
- (g) equipping of points of entry with thermal scanners and enhanced surveillance at all points of entry is ongoing;
- (h) health promotion, public awareness and media communication are active.

Mr Speaker, recently we had two Ebola disease scares reported at the Ndola Central and Levy Mwanawasa Hospitals. Both cases were investigated and tested negative. To date, I repeat that there is no confirmed case of Ebola recorded in Zambia. The fact that we had scares validates our assertion that our disease surveillance and intelligence programme is alert.

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Our virology laboratories at the University Teaching Hospital (UTH) and the University of Zambia (UNZA) School of Veterinary Medicine are also on high alert and have been conducting tests on various samples.

Mr Speaker, may I emphasise that Zambia, in its role as the Africa CDC Regional Collaborating Centre is also coordinating preparedness among other member states in the Southern African Development Community (SADC). Recently, Zambia hosted training in public health emergency management for the sixteen SADC member states. The member states continue to engage in information sharing on a video conference sharing platform through the Extension for Community Healthcare Outcomes (ECHO) Platform.

Mr Speaker, may I also update the House on the Cholera situation in Zimbabwe which also poses a threat on the community in Zambia considering the movements of our people. Since the declaration of a cholera outbreak on 6th September, 2018 affecting Harare, 5,008 cases and 28 deaths have been recorded accumulatively as at 14th September, 2018. Mr Speaker, Zambia has not recorded a single case of Cholera.

Sir, may I remind the House that the factors propagating the outbreak in Zimbabwe are similar to those that caused the outbreak in Zambia last year.

We therefore, have put in measures working with many other stakeholders to escalate prevention, preparedness and response plans include:

- (i) heightened surveillance and on 16th September, 2018, the two suspected cases in Kabwe and University of Zambia Clinic were investigated and the results were negative.
- (ii) Emergency stocks for diagnosis have been secured and the national, provincial and district laboratories are on alert.

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- (iii) Diagnostic capacity building at subnational levels to facility for decentralised testing and for confirmation of cases.
- (iv) The Public Health Emergency Operation Centre at the National Public Health Institute is in observation mode and ready to respond to any new cases and promptly control the situation.
- (v) A technical multi-sectoral audit and preparedness meeting was held this morning and is preparing for any possible eventualities.

Mr Speaker, the House may recall that Zambia sponsored a resolution to eliminate cholera globally by the year 2030 and further stated a national legacy goal to eliminate cholera by the year 2025.

Sir, following this declaration a multi-sectoral costed Cholera Elimination Plan is in development. This plan focuses on interventions aligned to coordination, surveillance, improvement of access to clean and safe Water, Sanitation and Health Promotion (WASH), health promotion as well as prevention through the use of Oral Cholera Vaccines (OCV)

Mr Speaker, Zambia as a Regional Collaborating Centre (RCC) is also coordinating a regional cholera elimination strategy aimed at implementing long term interventions in the region with the goal of preventing the occurrence of cholera and controlling outbreaks in a timely manner.

Mr Speaker, I am confident that through the multi-sectoral approach we are implementing to prepare, prevent and if need arises control outbreaks in the country, we will achieve our goal to secure health for our people in Zambia.

Mr Speaker, I would like to conclude by emphasising that Zambia is safe and it has not recorded any case of Ebola or cholera. However, the preparedness levels in the country have been escalated. I therefore, wish to make a clarion call and request my fellow Members of Parliament to support the multi-sectoral teams and activities assigned in the different

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constituencies related to disease intelligence and surveillance, preparedness, health seeking behaviour, personal and environmental hygiene to ensure we prevent the occurrence of Ebola and not have a repeat of the cholera outbreak in Zambia. Hon. Members of Parliament are encouraged to interact with the population and leadership of committees and support them.

Mr Speaker, I thank you.