

U.N. Security Council passes historic resolution to confront Ebola

Ebola's devastation in three West African countries today compelled the U.N. Security Council to convene its first emergency meeting ever to discuss a public health crisis. It unanimously passed a resolution that declared the spread of the virus a "threat to international peace and security" and called on the world to send more health care workers and supplies to Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Guinea, and not to isolate those countries.

Several speakers stressed that the epidemic is especially tragic because the three countries have made significant progress in their development in the past few years.

U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations Samantha Power, who chaired today's meeting, noted that the resolution had 130 co-sponsors, more than any previous one in the history of the Security Council.

Here are excerpts of speeches made by Power and others.

Ban Ki-moon, U.N. secretary-general:

"The gravity and scale of the situation now requires a level of international action unprecedented for health emergencies. ... The leaders of the affected countries have asked the United Nations to coordinate the global response. We are committed to do what is needed with the speed and scale required ...

This unprecedented situation requires unprecedented steps to save lives and safeguard peace and security. Therefore I have decided to establish a United Nations health mission combining the World Health Organization's strategic perspective with a very strong logistics and operational capability. This international mission, to be known as the United Nations Mission for Ebola Emergency Response, or UNMEER, will have five priorities: stopping the outbreak, treating the infected, insuring essential services, preserving stability, and preventing further outbreaks."

David Nabarro, senior U.N. system coordinator for Ebola virus disease:

"There is a disease outbreak that is advancing at an exponential speed. ... The doubling speed is about every 3 weeks. ... The response is increasing at more like a linear speed, so if you had a graph, it would look like a straight line. What that means is the outbreak is accelerating away from the control effort. ... The challenge is to make sure that all these different offers [for support] are coordinated effectively with a very powerful platform that enables everybody to work in the region safely and not get themselves infected with the virus. ... What's absolutely vital, Madam President, is a very big tent, because this requires the whole world to come in behind the countries and behind their people to get a rapid outcome."

Margaret Chan, director-general of the World Health Organization:

"This deadly and dreaded Ebola virus got ahead of us in a fast-moving outbreak as described by Dr. Nabarro that keeps delivering one surprise after another. Now we must catch up in the most urgent and pragmatic way possible. ...

This is likely the greatest peacetime challenge that the United Nations and its agencies have ever faced. None of us experienced in containing outbreaks has ever seen in our lifetimes an emergency on this scale with this degree of suffering and with this magnitude of cascading consequences. ... In some areas, hunger has become an even greater concern than the virus. ... Everything now is unprecedented. Everything now is happening faster than ever before. The needs are immense and we know it."

Jackson Niamah, a physician's assistant at an Ebola treatment center in Monrovia run by Doctors Without Borders:

"One day this week, I sat outside the treatment center eating my lunch. I met a boy who burst through the gates. His father had died from Ebola a week ago. I saw him with blood at the mouth. We had no space. We could not take him in. ... When he turned away, he walked into town, and I thought to myself, this boy is going to take a taxi and he is going to go home and infect his family. ...

Please send your helicopters, your centers, your beds, and your expert personnel. But know that we also need the basics. There are still homes in Monrovia that do not have soap, water, and buckets. Even these simple things could help curb the spread of the virus.

The future of my country is hanging in the balance. ... We do not have the capacity to respond to the crisis on our own. If the international community does not stand up, we will be wiped out. We need your help. We need it now."

Samantha Power, U.S. ambassador to the United Nations:

"Looking away will not make this go away. One of the main reasons this outbreak has spread so dramatically is that up to now, we haven't come together sufficiently to confront it. ... Isolation is effective and indeed necessary for dealing with individuals who may have been exposed to Ebola, it is utterly counterproductive when applied to entire countries. It deprives them of the very resources they need to bring the virus under control. So when governments in the region tell over 70 disease investigators that if they travel to the infected areas to volunteer, they will not be allowed back into their own countries, they not only put the currently affected countries at greater risk, but also their own countries.

Today instead of isolating the affected countries we call for flooding them, flooding them with the resources that are desperately needed to turn the tide in this fight. ... If today's resolution is not followed by action on a scale and scope commensurate to the virus, this resolution will be cited years from now as evidence that we raised hope that we didn't deliver on."

The Ebola Files: Given the current Ebola outbreak, unprecedented in terms of number of people killed and rapid geographic spread, Science and Science Translational Medicine have made [a collection of research and news articles on the viral disease](#) **freely available to researchers and the general public.*