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WHO DIRECTOR GENERAL VISITS UGANDA TO ASSESS EBOLA RESPONSE

Kampala, 17 June 2019:– The Ministry of Health received the World Health Organization (WHO) Director General, Dr. Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, who came to assess Uganda’s response to the current Ebola outbreak in Kasese District, Western Uganda.

Dr. Tedros made a stopover in Uganda while on his way from the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) where he visited the Ebola hotspots, Butembo and Katwa. This is his third visit to Uganda since the Ebola outbreak was declared in August 2018 in DRC.

He was received by the Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng and her technical teams, Mrs Rosa Malango the UN Resident Representative, Dr Yonas Tegyn the WHO country Rep. Uganda and Dr Lisa Nelson, the Director CDC Uganda, yesterday at Protea Hotel in Entebbe at 7:00PM.

In his remarks, he pledged continued support to Uganda to contain this outbreak. “From our side, I would like to pledge that we will continue mobilizing global and regional support to control this outbreak as soon as possible. It is not clean until the outbreak in DRC is finished”

Dr Tedros commented on the seemingly declining trends in Butembo and Katwa. He said, “There appears to be a decline in Butembo and Katwa areas. However, in my discussions with my colleagues, we agreed to be very careful with optimism but very cautious optimism because the Ebola situation in DRC has been very unpredictable with up and down trends.

He further said that Mabalako where the Ebola outbreak was first confirmed in August 2018 has once again become a hot bed of new infections. “Mabalako is now the hottest place where cases actually came from to Uganda” Dr Tedros noted.

Dr. Tedros explained that “I have accepted the assessment of the WHO Emergency Committee that although the Ebola outbreak in DRC is an emergency in the country and the region, it does not currently constitute a Public Health Emergency of International Concern(PHEIC).”

He also revealed that in December 2018, WHO requested MERCK to produce more doses of the ‘Ebola-rVSV’ vaccine, to continue supporting the outbreak.

In her remarks, the Minister of Health, Hon. Dr. Jane Ruth Aceng said that, the transition from a preparedness mode to a response mode was not difficult given that Ministry of health and partners had invested heavily in ten months of preparations to handle any eventualities.



However, she said, “the challenge is that we now have to again mobilize resources for the response phase.

She appreciated the WHO for the support with the Ebola vaccines during the preparedness phase, where over 4,200 frontline health workers and other workers were vaccinated in Uganda. “During this response phase, we have received a total of 3400 doses of the vaccine. A donation of 400 doses from the DRC as a quick initial measure to kick start vaccination of contacts, frontline health workers and other workers who were not vaccinated, and an additional 3,000 doses sent in by WHO. All these arrived very timely and vaccinations commenced last Saturday, 15th June 2019 where over 20 contacts were vaccinated. Today, we expected to vaccinate over 70 people and the process will continue.”

Dr Tedros is expected to meet the President of Republic of Uganda H. E. Yoweri Museveni on Monday, 17th June 2019 for a bilateral on the current Ebola outbreak that has spilled over to Uganda.

Dr Aceng appreciated the efforts and contributions of all partners in Uganda towards the containment of the Ebola outbreak.

The UN resident Coordinator, Rosa Malango appreciated the political commitment of Government in responding to emergencies. “I have discussed with Dr. Yonas, and agreed to meet on Monday 17th June 2019, to once again analyze the gaps and identify where support is needed in terms of financial resources” she said.

As of now, Uganda has no confirmed case of Ebola. Two suspect cases were under isolation in Bwera Ebola Treatment Unit as of Sunday 16th June. One of the suspect cases tested negative for Ebola and has been discharged, while results of the other suspect cases is pending.

Ministry of Health remains on high alert and appeals to the population to remain calm and cooperate with the response teams on the ground.

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