



## AU COMMISSIONER IN MEETINGS WITH NIGERIAN MINISTERS FOCUSING ON RESPONSES TO THE EBOLA CRISIS

### Press Release



**Addis Ababa, 1 October 2014-AU** Commissioner of Social Affairs Dr. Mustapha Kaloko has briefed the Nigerian Federal Minister of Health Professor Onyebuchi Chukwu on the Commission's response to the Ebola crisis, and the deployment of the African Union Support to Ebola in West Africa (ASEOWA) mission to tackle the emergency situation caused by the Ebola outbreak. He commended the exemplary action of the Nigerian Government in containing the disease.

On ASEOWA, the Commissioner said the operation aims at filling the existing gap in international efforts to combat the disease, and pointed that ASEOWA will work with affected countries, World Health Organisation (WHO), United Nations Office for Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), United States Center for Disease Control (CDC), European Union and other agencies already on the ground. He emphasized the need for strong health institutions and called for the lifting of restrictions such as border closures and opening of humanitarian corridors so as to get food supplies and other commodities to the affected countries. The Commissioner called for concerted efforts in the fight against Ebola and underscored the need for fast tracking of the establishment of an African CDC. He appealed to Nigeria to continue training more field epidemiologists in the region.

In response, the Nigerian Federal Minister of Health, commended the AU for the interest shown in the fight against Ebola as manifested by the deployment of health experts in the affected region. He called for proper coordination and strong leadership in the process. The Minister however, encouraged the AU and other partners to use the structures available within the West African Health Organisation in the exercise. He assured the AU of Nigeria's commitment to maintain open borders with the affected countries and encouraged other Member States to do likewise in accordance with the

positions of ECOWAS and the AU. He called for focus on case management, contact tracing, community engagement, psychosocial needs and food and other supplies. He underscored the need to ensure the safety of health workers and for a robust communication campaign to engage affected communities. The Minister said that the private sector should be encouraged to support the fight against EVD, and that private hospitals and survivors should be supported.

In another engagement, the AU Commissioner met the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Amb. Alhaji Aminu Wali and briefed him on the interventions the AU has put in place in the fight against Ebola. While commending the AU for showing strong leadership in the fight against Ebola, the Minister appealed to Member States to end the stigmatization and closure of borders with affected countries. He mentioned the humanitarian difficulties the residents of the affected countries are facing as a result of the closures and pledged to engage ECOWAS Member States and some regional airlines with a view of allowing the free movements of people and supplies to the affected countries. The Commissioner commended the minister on Nigeria's position.

The Commissioner also commended ECOWAS for the role it is playing in the fight to tackle the EVD. He expressed AU's satisfaction with ECOWAS and regional activities aimed at containing the disease, such as the establishment of a coordination centre in Guinea and called for the strengthening of the coordination and integration efforts.