



Directorate of Information and Communication

AU Sends additional 250 Health Experts to Ebola Affected Countries Partners with Mobile Operators to launch AfricaAgainstEbola SMS campaign

Lagos, Nigeria 3rd December, 2014 – As part of the African Union’s effort to stop the Ebola disease in Liberia, Guinea and Sierra Leone, two hundred and fifty (250) health volunteers from the Federal Republic of Nigeria were given a send off ceremony on 3rd December in Lagos before deployment to the affected countries. The Nigerian health contingent will be part of the African Union Support to Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA) operations already deployed in the three countries.

The medics were assembled by the Federal Government of Nigeria in response to the appeal made by the Chairperson of the African Union Commission Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma for Member States to contribute health personnel to join the fight against Ebola. The team comprises medical doctors, nurses and other medical and paramedical personnel and epidemiologists.

Meanwhile, at the historic ceremony, the AU Commission in collaboration with mobile telecom operators and other private sector companies, launched an sms campaign, as part of the resource mobilization efforts to support the ASEOWA operations. The SMS campaign aims to mobilise citizens across the Continent to contribute in the fight against Ebola by texting “StopEbola” to 7979 and donating one USD per message. The funds raised will be used for the training and deployment of further ASEOWA personnel. The AU is targeting to deploy more than 1000 volunteers before the end of the year.

In her opening remarks, Dr. Dlamini Zuma expressed appreciation to the Government and people of Nigeria for contributing health professionals to the fight to Ebola. She called for a united front against Ebola and encouraged that “we must not relent as long as Ebola remains a real threat to our existence”. The AU Chairperson further appealed for the resumption of flights to the affected countries so as to end the isolation and stigmatization of the three countries. Finally, she appealed to all citizens of the Continent to contribute to the AfricaAgainstEbola campaign.

The Executive Chairman of Econet Wireless Mr Strive Masiyiwa lauded the African Union for acting decisively to defeat Ebola. “It is appropriate that at a time when we are facing a medical crisis, we have able leadership in the form of Dr Dlamini Zuma”.

The Nigerian Minister of Health Dr Khaliru Alhassan, speaking on behalf of President Goodluck Jonathan assured the AU of Nigeria’s commitment in the fight against Ebola

and that the country will continue to play a leadership role and share the country's experiences on stopping the disease.

Speaking on behalf of the private sector and introducing the AfricaAgainstEbola initiative, businessman Mr. Aliko Dangote called for the mobilisation of every resource and appealed to "every African citizen to contribute by SMS to the fight to stop Ebola in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone". I want to thank all the GMS operators for making this possible" he concluded. It will recalled that during the Africa business round table conference in Addis Ababa last month, thirty two and a half million USD was contributed by the private sector across the continent.

AU Commissioner of Social Affairs Dr Mustapha Sidiki Kaloko appraised the meeting of the AU intervention since April 2014 to date. He highlighted the decisions made by the AU structures and key deployments that have been made to the three affected countries.

At present, the AU has deployed hundreds of health experts in the three most affected countries to fight the Ebola disease. Due to the high demand for more personnel needed to join the fight against Ebola, Member States have responded favourably to the AU Chairperon's appeal for more contribution of health personnel to the AU team. In a related development, another 210 health volunteers from the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia, and 52 from the Democratic Republic of Congo, will be deployed to the sub region in a fortnight under the ASEOWAoperations.

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