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UNIÃO AFRICANA

Addis Ababa, ETHIOPIA, P. O. Box 3243 Telephone: +251 11 5517 700 Fax: +251 11 5517844

E-mail: Chairperson@africa-union.org Website: www.au.int

**Statement by the African Union Commission Chairperson,
HE Dr. Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma**

To the

High level Meeting on Ebola Response

UNGA, New York. 25 September 2014

UN Deputy Secretary General Jan Eliason
Dr. Margaret Chan, WHO Director General
President of Guinea
Your Excellencies, Heads of State and Government
Dr. Jim Kim from the World Bank
Ministers, Leaders of Delegations
Representatives from International health organisations
Ladies and Gentlemen

The Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone has caused untold miseries to the peoples of these countries and therefore requires our solidarity, coordinated responses and urgent interventions.

We therefore welcome this initiative by the United Nations to convene a Global Ebola Response Coalition, to enable us to make swift, comprehensive and effective interventions to halt the spread of the disease and address the public health crisis.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The current Ebola outbreak in parts of West Africa is unprecedented, both in terms of the region where it is occurring and the number of infections and deaths. Its occurrence in countries that have just emerged from conflicts and are still rebuilding their public health systems, as well as public trust and social cohesion, makes this a huge burden. It has a severe impact on health workers and women, who are at the frontline of the disease in these countries. It also adversely affects children, who are often left orphaned, with no families to take care of them.

Our coordinated and urgent responses to the crisis is therefore necessary: to provide the three countries with financial assistance, with equipment, protective clothing, mobile laboratories and other facilities, to be able to track and contain the disease, and to provide treatment to the sick in a secure environment. Most important, as a result of the severe impact on health workers in these countries, they

require health personnel (doctors, technicians, clinicians, nurses) that can help with the immediate and urgent interventions.

Many organizations have shown their solidarity by being in the frontline of efforts in these countries, and we must here single out the medical professionals and health workers especially from Médecins Sans Frontières, the Red Cross, Samaritan's Purse, as well as the US Centre for Disease Control. The African Union Ebola Outbreak in West Africa (ASEOWA), has started deploying the first team of medical and other volunteer personnel from various African countries to Liberia. This includes medical specialists from countries such as Uganda and the DRC that have dealt with Ebola before. We shall be sending further teams to Sierra Leone and Guinea, but it is yet a drop in the oceans, we need hundreds more volunteers.

Secondly, we have to ensure that countries in the neighbourhood and other regions have systems in place to prevent and trace infection. The ECOWAS and African Ministers of Health, working with the World Health Organisation, since their first meetings in April this year, have already begun to coordinate national and regional efforts in this regard.

Thirdly, the disease in its current manifestations also place economic burdens on the countries concerned, ranging from fiscal strains with money having to be diverted from other causes to fight the disease, restrictions on informal and cross-border trade, as well as on agriculture. Our comprehensive measures therefore have to also look at this economic dimension and we thank the World Bank and the African Development Bank for their efforts in this regard, but we should all do more in this regard.

The recent Emergency session of the African Union Executive Council noted that we should avoid compounding the burden on the affected states, by taking measures whose impact may lead to worse consequences than the disease itself. It was in this context that the Emergency session called on Member states to lift all travel bans on flights and passengers from the affected countries, and to cooperate

to put in place measures at borders to ensure screening. We thank those countries who have already lifted the travel ban, and urged those who have not done so to recommence flights to these countries.

Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen

The Global Coalition to be launched today must look at all these immediate and urgent issues. At the same time, effective disease control is about having strong public health systems in place, with access to health care for all and institutions at national, regional and continental levels to share information on diseases.

As we assist the affected countries to respond to this immediate crisis, we must not lose sight of this, so that we build resilience in the long term and prevent the recurrence of such tragedies.

We hope that the plea made by the Secretary General and other speakers, for all of us to act with speed, will be heeded.

The African Union will continue to stand by the three countries and the region during this difficult period, and thank all partners and the UN system for the continued support and solidarity.

I thank you