



AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT BANK GROUP

Remarks at the high-level event on Ebola

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Donald Kaberuka
President of the African Development Bank Group

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Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon,
President Jim Kim,
Managing Director Christine Lagarde,
Ministers,
Thank you all.

In 2010, there was a massive earthquake in Chile of 8.8 magnitudes on the Richter scale. In the same year, there was another earthquake in Haiti of a lesser severity: 7.0 on the Richter scale.

Yet, in the Chilean earthquake, if I remember correctly, less than 400 people died.

In Haiti, the dead numbered 230,000 because of, largely, weak systems.

The reason the Ebola epidemic in the Mano River area got to this disastrous point is due to three reasons:

First, the epidemic attacked a weak area of Africa, rather like the Haiti earthquake, a zone in Africa with some of, if not the weakest health systems in Africa.

Secondly, there is a feeling that this was seen initially a remote African public health issue rather than an emergency of potentially global proportions, with would kill and lay waste to economies and social fabrics everywhere.

Thirdly, as a result the international response was too little, too slow, too late.

Finally, the psychosis and pandemic fear generated has let to closure of borders, disruption of commerce making logistics that much more complicated and exacerbating the economic crisis.

At last, the international community is mobilizing, from supplies, logistics and facilities for care.

So today, I want to thank everyone in the international system that is responding.

Above all, I want to commend the affected countries themselves, their people, their gallant health workers.

In the immediate I see three priorities:

- 1) epidemic;
- 2) macroeconomic support; and
- 3) stop the epidemic from spreading elsewhere to other regions.

The African Development Bank was among the first organizations to respond. At the very beginning if the outbreak we provided US \$3 million as emergency.

When it became clear this was a fully blown crisis we followed that up with \$60 million in support through the WHO, in August.

Last week, a budget support package of \$150 million was approved directly into the budgets of the affected countries.

This will provide governments with the means to combat the disease and support the countries' economies in the short and medium term.

In addition we have put in place a \$10-million facility for African health workers to volunteer to go to the Mano River area.

Going forward, we should focus on four issues:

- 1) I agree with all here that we need speed, flexibility;
- 2) We should avoid bureaucratic layers in the name of coordination which will delay action;
- 3) We need critical mass;
- 4) We should do no harm.

Let's be careful with doomsday narratives.

We need to ensure that what we are doing do not damage investors' confidence for the medium term.

Each number, and each projection that we put out there must be well analyzed, thought-out, bearing in mind that private sectors and investors will be listening and taking decisions for the long term.

Instead, we must show that we have the means, the will to deal with the epidemic.

Lastly, we should empower governments and develop their capacities to be able to do what governments are supposed to do.

The narrative getting out of this room must be one which says "we can overcome Ebola" rather than "Ebola is getting out of hand".

Finally, let me appeal to the international community here: Let everything we do here be "additional" to the programmes we had already in the pipeline for the Mano River for the reconstruction of the region.

I know times are hard, but let us deal with the emergency bearing in mind the longer term.

Many of you have referred to the broader socio-economic impacts.

I am very pleased to hear Christine Lagarde saying clear that "fiscal space" need not be an issue here even if that means expanding the deficit in the short term.

But let me hope that we can all work together to mobilize the resources needed to stabilize the economy, build health systems and return the Mano River area to the growth path on which they had embarked upon since 2004.

This epidemic is not only taking lives in a region which saw much blood and mayhem in the 1990s, but is perhaps the worst Africa has seen for a long time.

I can assure you that the African Development Bank will play its part, conscious that this is a problem whose whole epicenter is in Africa and therefore our responsibility is that much larger.

It is one we are prepared to assume.

Thank you.