



Canada



September 15, 2020

Joint statement by the Chiefs of Mission of the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and the director of INRB on the Ebola epidemic affecting Equateur province

We just returned from a visit to Equateur where we reviewed Ebola response efforts as well as broader regional health issues. As the outbreak in Equateur has progressed, it has become clear that thanks to the efforts of everyday Congolese heroes, the DRC is fully capable of stopping Ebola, as it has during previous outbreaks, both in Equateur and in the east. With Professor Muyembe leading the response, alongside the support of international partners, we are confident that the DRC will not just end this outbreak, but will emerge better prepared and more resilient. Ongoing response efforts are building up infrastructure that will be in place to address future health challenges.

There is concern that the outbreak in Equateur may spread further. We learned from our trip that the main practical challenges on the ground are primarily due to the region's difficult geography. Long distances make communication and transportation extremely burdensome. Expert teams have difficulty sharing information in real time; health responders are limited in their movements. These issues can be overcome, and we intend to focus our efforts to address them.

In the long term, this crisis also presents an opportunity to strengthen not just the Ebola response, but DRC's overall health system. It is clear that health authorities and the international community are learning important lessons from previous outbreaks, and we salute the government's commitment to end "Ebola business" and to avoid misuse of public funds, for example by ensuring that only those actively working on the response are being compensated. As the COVID-19 pandemic has shown, in societies all around the globe frontline health workers rise to meet the greatest challenges at great sacrifice. They do so because they are committed to helping their communities. These national heroes deserve to be paid a regular salary through transparent, sustainable and reliable processes.

During a visit to Bolomba territory, we witnessed firsthand that the people of Congo are fed up with corrupt practices and demand the type of good governance and fiscal discipline that is required for an effective health response. It is clear that no good public services can be delivered unless corruption is addressed, abusers are held accountable, and frontline responders are paid a

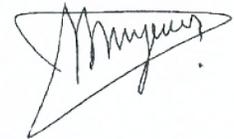
sustainable wage. Only then can DRC establish the public health system needed to combat future outbreaks of Ebola or other diseases.

We must also ensure that no one is overlooked during this response effort. Women are the backbone of Congolese society, and as such are disproportionately affected by Ebola. They care for the sick and provide for their families. But far too often their role in this effort is invisible. Any sustainable response needs to recognize the critical role women play in the community and the disproportionate toll they pay. It also needs to foster economic inclusion for the sustainable development of their communities that fully take into account women's rights.

We have reached a turning point in the history of a terrible virus. Today, no one needs to die from Ebola. Vaccinations prevent people from getting the virus and effective treatments cure those who are infected. This is a tremendous accomplishment for the Congolese and their international partners. It is a testament to the DRC's ability to rise to even the most complex challenges when it puts its people first. We have reached this point by working together, and we will continue working hand-in-hand to end this outbreak and save lives. Tous Ensemble! Toza Elongo!

Signatories:

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