



IN THE SECOND SESSION OF THE SIXTH PARLIAMENT OF THE FOURTH REPUBLIC OF GHANA

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE ON HEALTH ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS EBOLA RESPONSE EMERGENCY HUB IN GHANA

1.0 INTRODUCTION

Following concerns expressed in the House on the outbreak of Ebola in neighbouring countries and the establishment of the United Nations (UN) Mission for Emergency Ebola Response Hub in Ghana, Rt. Hon. Speaker directed the Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration to brief the Committee on Health on the arrangements necessitating the establishment of the United Nations (UN) Mission for Emergency Ebola Response Hub in Ghana.

The Committee met with Hon. Dr. Kwaku Agyeman-Mensah, Minister for Health, Hon. Kwesi Quartey, Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration and the technical teams from the Ministries of Health and Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration.

2.0 OBJECT OF THE REFERRAL

The object of the referral was for the Ministry of Health and Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration to brief the Committee on Health on the arrangements necessitating the establishment of the United Nations (UN) Mission for Emergency Ebola Response Hub in Ghana.

3.0 BRIEFS ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF THE UNITED NATIONS (UN) MISSION FOR EMERGENCY EBOLA RESPONSE HUB IN GHANA

3.1 Ministry for Health

The Minister, in his presentation gave a chronological background on Ebola, its development, causes and mode of transmission.

The Minister for Health, Hon. Kwaku Agyeman- Mensah reiterated Ghana's preparedness towards ensuring that the Ebola virus does not occur in Ghana. He said however in the likelihood that it does; the Ministry was putting in place measures that would ensure that it would be quickly contained and curbed.

Hon. Kwaku Agyeman- Mensah said the Ministry had taken delivery of 10,000 personal Protective Equipment and 300 non-contact thermometers at the cost of GH¢1.5million. These items had been distributed to major ports of entry and hospitals. Construction and equipping of the Ebola treatment centre at the Tema General Hospital in the Greater Accra Region had been completed. Work on the other centres in Tamale and Kumasi were however on-going and are to cater for the northern and middle belts respectively.

The Ministry of Health has also received financial, material and technical support from Ghana's donor partners, both local and international to help combat the disease.

The Ministry was setting up an Incident Command Structure for the Ebola Control. The Command would have an incident manager with staff working on full time basis. The Ministry had also received training from the Centre for Disease Control in Atlanta for Emergency Preparedness and interacted with the Nigeria Ebola Team.

On the establishment of the Emergency Response Hub in Ghana, the Minister said Ghana has been the trail blazer of Africa, was the first African country to attain independence. This action by Government to establish the Emergency Hub in Ghana was another cap to the country's leadership prowess.

The Minister intimated that Ghana was basically chosen in the West Africa sub-region because of the country's relatively strong health system. Ghana in accepting to host the Hub is primarily because of the country's place in History as a trail blazer

and the desire to contribute to the solutions in handling Ebola at the time when our President, the Chair of ECOWAS, is being forthright, decisive and solidifying the leadership of Africa.

The Minister informed the Committee that the State had reached some agreement with the UN Mission on certain aspects of their operations in the country as follows

- The Mission is to ensure that staff present in Ghana are healthy from the Ebola disease at all times,
- The Mission has agreed to conform to Ghana's Ebola Standards, and
- The Mission would not treat any patient in the country, among others

The Minister indicated that the United Nations had identified Ghana as the standard for Ebola control.

3.2 Ministry of Foreign Affairs

The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs, Hon. Kwesi Quartey concurred with the Minister for Health and said that President Mahama, in his capacity as the Chair of the Authority of Heads of State of ECOWAS declared that Ghana was ready to be the Hub of the United Nations Mission for the Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) in the West Africa sub-region. He said this statement was made following the unanimous adaptation of UN General Assembly resolution 69/1 to provide a platform for wide-ranging international efforts to put an end to the spread of the disease and the need to have a hub to assist coordinate the operations of UNMEER.

The Deputy Minister informed the Committee that the UNMEER, whose headquarters is in Accra, has offices in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. The Mission has deployed so far a total number of two hundred and fifty (250) staff as follows:

- One hundred of the staff based in Ghana, and
- One fifty of the staff deployed to the three worst affected countries namely Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The Deputy Minister intimated that at the 69th Session of the United Nations General Assembly in New York, H. E. President Mahama stated that "Ebola is not just a Liberian problem, nor a Sierra Leone or Guinean problem. It is not just a West Africa

Problem. Ebola is a problem that belongs to the world because it is a disease that knows no boundaries."

The Ebola Virus Disease has now taken centre stage in the world geo-politics and is dominating many countries' foreign policies. A lot has been done that notwithstanding there still remains an urgent requirement for sustained momentum, more logistics and even more resources to defeat this deadly disease. It was in the light of this that Ghana offered to host the UNMEER hub in Ghana.

4.0 DISCUSSIONS

4.1 Support that the Ministry of Health had received

The Committee enquired about the materials and support that the country had put in place to combat the Ebola virus.

The Minister for Health told the Committee that the Ministry had procured 10,000 personal protective equipment, 300 non- contact thermometers as well as three walk-through thermometers. The walks through thermometers have been installed at Kotoka International Airport. The other three hundred (300) non-contact thermometers have been distributed to all entry points. He also said that each Regional hospital had been provided GH¢100,000 for their isolation center.

The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration said that in order to boost the country's preparedness, the Chinese Government signed a US\$812,786 agreement with the Ministry of Finance to provide materials to support the country.

4.2 Benefit of establishing the hub

The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs informed the Committee that from the establishment of the Hub, benefits may not be immediate or tangible but Ghana's image has greatly been enhanced.

The Minister for Health further informed the Committee that apart from the goodwill that Ghana was enjoying, it is also receiving support from a number of development partners and donors towards augmenting government's preparedness and response to the Ebola disease. He intimated to the Committee that the Hub would be a logistics centre for UNMEER. Thus the country would benefit indirectly from the logistics the Hub would provide. The Committee was informed that Ghana has

received support from other donor partners. **Attached is the list of the support received.**

4.3 Development of International Protocols for the Hub

The Committee inquired whether protocols regulating the setting up of the UNMEER Hub had been developed and agreed to by all parties.

The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration explained that the Ghana and the UN agencies already had protocols that regulate their relationship. These existing protocols would apply to UNMEER. However, with regard to the Hub in particular, there was an on-going negotiation to have a protocol for the Hub which would clarify areas that may not have been clearly captured in the existing protocols.

He explained that Ebola had taken everybody by surprise and therefore the specific protocols for the UNMEER were under negotiations, and intended to tighten the existing controls. He assured the Committee that there is no legal vacuum. The Ministry would however expedite the process.

4.4 Ban on holding Conferences in the country

It came to the fore that there is a ban on hosting of international conferences in the country. This ban was intended to limit movement and the spread of Ebola into Ghana. The Committee however noted that activities to and from the Hub would extend to countries that have recorded Ebola.

The Minister for Health, while acceding to the Conference ban was of the view that closing borders to fight against Ebola was not the best. He explained that the destiny of Ghana was tied to the destinies of its neighbouring countries. He said people continue to move across the borders due to their relations and other interests. People move across these artificial barriers on daily basis as a basic form of their existence. Therefore in the fight against Ebola, there was the need for collaborative efforts from every country to avoid duplication and waste of resources because no single country could stop the outbreak.

4.5 Treatment of Ghana Student in Czech Republic

The Committee inquired about the inhuman treatment of a Ghanaian student in Czech Republic who was suspected to have contradicted the Ebola disease and what roles the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration were playing on the issue.

The Deputy Minister for Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration informed the Committee that preliminary objection on the treatment meted out to the Ghanaian student had been raised with the Czech Embassy.

The Committee urged the Ministry to send a strong protest on the inhumane treatment of the Ghanaian student.

4.6 Follow-up from previous Committee engagement with Ministry of Health

The Committee further enquired from the Ministry of Health the status of some recommendations that the Committee on Health made when the Committee met the Ministry in August on measures taken to deal with Ebola in the country.

The Recommendations were that the:-

- Ministry of Health should set out a one source information centre for Ebola at the Ministry within a week.
- Ministry should establish one message on Ebola, possibly on a website for the public as quickly as possible preferable in a month.
- Ministry should establish a strategic team to monitor the media. The team should include the Chairman of the Ghana Medical Association and Prof Dodoo.
- technical persons at the Ministry should be the unit to respond to questions and issues on Ebola and not the Public Relations of the Ministry.
- Ministry liaises with the telecommunications industry to procure a four digit toll free hot line for Ebola issues as soon as possible. The Ministry should also ensure that the hotlines were working at all times.

The technical team from the Ministry informed the Committee that the Ministry had started implementing the recommendations.

The Committee reiterated its recommendations and indicated to the Ministry that these recommendations were time-bound and therefore should be implemented expeditiously.

5.0 OBSERVATIONS AND RECOMMENDATION

5.1 Establishment of the UNMEER Hub

After careful deliberations, the Committee observed that Ghana accepted for the establishment of the UNMEER Hub in the country because of our track record, on strong health systems and the benefits from the logistics it would provide to UNMEER. Ghana has always led and is a symbol that African countries look up to.

The Committee also observed that the fight against Ebola cannot be won with closed borders as some have suggested, rather the need for all join in assisting each other, especially those suffering from the epidemic. The Committee agrees that Ghana is a trailblazer in Africa and by hosting the Hub; the country has achieved another milestone.

5.2 Establishment of Command Centres and Isolation centres

The Committee noted that as a result of the interaction with the Nigerian team, Ghana needs to establish incident command centres and Isolation centres to help isolate Ebola cases and deal effectively with it as swift as possible.

Taking cue from the effective handling of the Ebola cases in Senegal and Nigeria, the Committee recommends to the Ministry of Health to take a cue from the lessons and expeditiously set up quarantine centres across the country to ensure that when and wherever there is an outbreak, the Centre would be able to contain the Ebola.

5.3 Development of Specific Protocols

The Committee further noted the efforts being made by the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration to conclude negotiations and establish protocols specifically for the management and control of Ebola disease.

The Committee was assured that even though these specific protocols have not been completed, there would be no legal vacuum in the Protocols and that the existing protocols can regulate the Hub. The specific protocols are intended to

tighten controls on Ebola. The Committee urges the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Regional Integration to expedite action on the protocols.

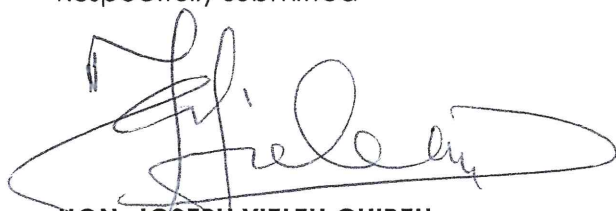
5.4 Brief by Minister of Health to the house

The Committee recommended that the Minister for Health should come to the House and further brief the House on the efforts that the Ministry of Health is doing to sensitize the public, prevent Ebola disease and other measures to tackle Ebola disease (should it be recorded in the country).

6.0 CONCLUSION

From the foregoing and the assurances from Government on the steps taken to prevent and handle Ebola in the country, the Committee recommends to the House that the establishment of the Hub is in the right direction and should be supported.

Respectfully submitted



HON. JOSEPH YIELEH CHIREH

CHAIRMAN

10 November 2014



ASANTE AMOAKO-ATTA

CLERK TO THE COMMITTEE

A-PPENDIX

SUPPORT RECEIVED FROM GHANA GOVERNMENT, DEVELOPMENT PARTNERS AND OTHER DONORS TOWARDS GHANA'S NATIONAL PREPAREDNESS AND RESPONSE TO THE EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE

NO.	Type of Support (Amount / Supplies)	SOURCE	BENEFICIARY INSTITUTION
1.	GHS ₵896,950	Ghana Government	Ghana Health Service (Tema Treatment Centre and Others)
2.	GHS 6 Million	Ghana Government	MDAs
3.	10,000 PPEs	Ghana Government	Health and Education
4.	70 infrared Thermometers	Airtel Ghana	Ghana Health Service
5.	Material aid worth 5 million Yuan Renminbi	Chinese Government	Government of Ghana
6.	USD \$ 1 million	Norwegian Government	WHO/Health Sector
7.	GHS ₵ 419,750 (cash and supplies)	UNICEF Ghana	Ghana Health Service
8.	USD \$ 1 million	USAID	USAID/Health sector
9.	USD \$ 125,000	ADB	WHO/Health Sector
10.	GHS ₵12million	DDF Facility	All Districts Assemblies
11.	Set of PPEs worth GHS ₵35,000	Samsung	Ghana Health Service
12.	150,000 pieces each of Posters and Fliers	JICA	Ghana Health Service
Sponsored A 3 day residential Training for 40 officials Ashanti Regional Health Service			
13.	2,000 pieces of flyers	World Vision	Ghana Health Service
14.	98,254.30 79,160.10 41,667.50	Newmont Ghana	Ghana Health Service Regional/Local / Korle-Bu
Total of 219,080.9 To regional and local health facilities in the catchment areas of Newmont Ghana			

