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MINUSMA TV

United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali

The Ebola hemorrhagic fever is wreaking havoc in several African countries, including several countries that border Mali. According to the latest bulletin published by the World Health Organization [WHO], dated September 6, of the over 4,200 confirmed, probable and suspect cases of the fever, Ebola has killed nearly 2,300. It is the first time in history that this pandemic has led to such devastation.

Margaret CHAN, WHO: This is historically the largest and most severe case of Ebola ever seen. After 40 years, no one—not even the EMTs and the epidemiologists who oversaw the crisis of 1967 to 1995—has ever seen anything like this disease. The entire world is involved in this and must take action to ensure that the threat of Ebola is under control. Let's stop it! Let's do it! Action, action and action!

In order to be best prepared, in the event that Ebola infects Mali, MINUSMA has brought in specialists from The Johns Hopkins Hospital. Their goal: to explain to Malian and international health officials how to deal with this pandemic, as much in terms of disseminating information as of preventing and ultimately taking charge of those confirmed cases that may occur in Mali.

Jean Gael RUYFFELAERE, Head Doctor, MINUSMA. We opened this training workshop to our Malian friends. And I think that it's not only a session about isolating [the virus] but also a session about how MINUSMA works. The aim of this training was, of course, to stay informed about the latest developments in the prevention and treatment of the Ebola virus striking this region. We are facing a worldwide pandemic without precedent. We had to be prepared, since the risk remains very high, even though there are no cases yet of Ebola in Mali.

Professor Ousmane KOITA, representative from the Health Ministry: Beginning in April, the Minister of Health established a response system, since Mali is an at-risk country, along with Guinea, where the epidemic has now appeared. So, I think that this training benefits from the expertise of the Health Minister in terms of responding to this disease.

The Malian government and the MINUSMA authorities have put into place an entire system of surveillance that allows them to limit the risk of this virus coming across the borders. Certain practical measures have also been set up to limit the risk of contamination in case of coming into contact with a suspected patient.

Polly TREXLER, Director of Operations for Hospital Epidemiology Infection Control (HEIC) at The Johns Hopkins Hospital: We provided training to all of the military

staff and leadership at the UN who attended the training course. This training is designed to teach them which kinds of protection to wear in order to protect themselves and others in case of exposure to a confirmed or suspect case of Ebola. We teach them how to properly put on protective gear, which consists of a mask, goggles and a one-piece suit, shoe covers, an apron and two pairs of gloves to protect themselves against any contamination in the event that a patient has Ebola.

Florence ONNWUEBUNAM, Participant: “Ebola Awareness” is a very helpful program. We’ve been provided with a lot of information: causes, prevention and case management—very important procedures. For you need to help the patient while also protecting yourself. I’m going to share this know-how with my unit; everything I learned will be very helpful in managing confirmed or suspect cases of Ebola—not only in Mali, but also in my country, for Nigeria does have patients suffering from this virus.

Although there have been no confirmed cases in Mali, MINUSMA and the Malian government, in their endeavor to create a mission for prevention, control and preparedness, have just completed the construction of an isolation unit.

Jean Gael RUYFFELAERE : This unit is essential for the employees of MINUSMA. We know very well that, in cases of Ebola, the Malian authorities will be themselves on the alert and also probably very busy taking care, of course, of the Malian people. In order not to overwork Malian hospitals, we had to strengthen our capacities within MINUSMA—all the while, of course, maintaining an indirect help to the Malian authorities.

Khadidia FALL, Participant: Just showing us how to use the equipment, how to prevent the spread of the virus of confirmed cases within our hospital is already a great help; and it is hoped that, after we get our equipment, we will be better prepared, better able to treat the cases that we may eventually have. We hope it will not come to that; but we think we will be of greater help having had this preparation.

Let us hope that, with this experience and with the education acquired during this training, our health care agents will know better how to respond to this epidemic, should it ever attack Mali.