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European Union

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Subject: Council conclusions on Ebola

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At its meeting on 20 October 2014, the Council adopted the Council conclusions set out in the annex to this note.

Council conclusions on Ebola

1. Recalling its conclusions and the European Council conclusions of August 2014, the Council remains deeply concerned about the ongoing spread of the Ebola virus in West Africa and the increasing number of people being infected and dying from it. The number of deaths in the region has exceeded 4500 and the epidemic continues to grow exponentially in Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea. In addition, the first cases among health workers being infected outside Africa were recently confirmed.
2. The Council renews its deepest condolences, of Member States and European Union citizens, to all those affected by the outbreak, governments and citizens. The Council also expresses its deep appreciation to all humanitarian and health workers in the front line and reaffirms its readiness to examine further ways of assisting them in their efforts.
3. The Council welcomes the efforts of Governments of affected and neighbouring countries, regional organisations and the international community at large in ensuring that victims receive adequate treatment, that support is provided to their families and that all actors involved, including international organisations and relevant non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are given safe and unhindered access to all affected areas. The Council commends the mobilisation of the African Union, its efforts at regional coordination and its solidarity with the countries affected by the outbreak. The humanitarian corridor from Dakar and the coming resumption of regional air services from Abidjan are important steps.

4. The Council recognises that a united, coordinated and increased effort is needed in order to contain the outbreak and provide the necessary and appropriate assistance to the countries affected and also to the neighbouring countries. In this respect, it stresses the importance of reinforcing regional and international cooperation at appropriate levels, as well as providing assistance to lead nations, NGOs and the United Nations (UN), particularly the World Health Organisation (WHO). The EU also looks forward to the quick implementation of the regional operational plan on the fight against Ebola by the Economic Community of West African States. The Council underlines the importance of all actors working together under the UN umbrella and coordinating assistance with the wider UN led effort. It also notes the need to include measures to create resilience in the assistance efforts.
5. The Council welcomes the UN Secretary General's decision to establish the first-ever UN emergency health mission, the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER), based in Accra as an important step in the global efforts to contain the outbreak, to assist with the management and coordination of the international response and take a strong leadership role at national levels. It also welcomes the appointment of David Nabarro, as Special Envoy on Ebola, and Anthony Banbury as his Special Representative and Head of UNMEER. The European Union will continue the close cooperation with both of them and coordinate its operational response to the epidemic with UNMEER.
6. The Council recognises that measures to contain the epidemic and to support the affected countries also require urgent additional assistance. In this regard, it calls on all international donors to respond to the UN appeal for \$ 987.8 million, including through the UN Ebola Trust Fund bearing in mind the important needs in the short and medium term. The EU is committed to play an active role in enhancing the international response and, respecting the overall coordinating role of the UN, is ready to coordinate with other international partners the organisation of a High Level Conference on Ebola with wide participation.

7. The European Union and its Member States have already committed over half a billion Euro to provide urgent medical care to those infected by the virus, to help contain the epidemic and to support governments of affected countries in mitigating the effects of the outbreak on their economies and essential services; the European Union is also contributing financially to the African Union ASEOWA mission (AU Support to Ebola Outbreak in West-Africa). Member States have also been providing substantive assistance, including the secondment of specialists, building of hospitals and availability of air lift capacities, and are mobilising resources in the field of medical research. In this regard, the Council welcomes the role of France, the UK and the US in mounting the response in the affected countries. The Council also welcomes the continued airlinks to and from the countries affected and in this respect it urges all countries to follow the relevant WHO guidelines. The European Union will continue to examine needs and provide further assistance to the countries of the region in countering the epidemic, mitigating its short and long-term effects, and enhancing the preparedness of countries in the wider region.
8. The Council fully shares the assessment of UN Security Council Resolution 2177 (2014) that the Ebola outbreak is a threat to international peace and security. The Council will examine at its next meeting the wider political, security and economic implications of Ebola on the most affected and neighbouring West African countries. The Council encourages the EEAS, in cooperation with the Commission and the Member States, to intensify its ongoing diplomatic outreach to African countries and organisations and reiterate the need to isolate the disease but not to isolate countries.

9. The Council welcomes the close coordination of the assistance provided by the Member States and the EU institutions and the establishment of the Task Force on Ebola within the Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC). Ensuring synergies in our common response is of the highest priority. The Council also encourages the involvement of the private sector as part of the international health community as exemplified by the on-going works of World Health Summit (Berlin, 19-22 October). The Council underlines also the importance of continuous consultations and information sharing, at the appropriate level, on issues and measures to be taken to protect the EU and its citizens from potential contamination. The EU underlines the need for continuous objective public information on the Ebola virus to prevent possible stigmatisation.
10. The Council welcomes agreement amongst Member States and the Commission to guarantee appropriate care for international health responders within available resources to receive the treatment they need, in line with clinical advice, via treatment in country to an appropriate standard or medical evacuation supported by means of a specialized commercial aircraft or member states capabilities on a case by case basis. This will be coordinated through the EU Emergency Response Coordination Centre. The evacuation operation is eligible for financing of up to 100% from the EU budget. The Council also calls for an increase in EU Medevac capacity.
11. The Council takes note of the Commission/EEAS EU Comprehensive Response Framework for the Ebola Virus Outbreak in Western Africa as requested by the European Council in its conclusions of 30 August. It invites the Commission and the EEAS to pursue their cooperation on this issue and to inform rapidly the Council of the progress made in the implementation of the Comprehensive Response Framework. The Council also takes note of the ongoing work in enhancing the collective EU response to the Ebola crisis, including its wider political, security and economic implications, and tasks the EEAS and the Commission to present options with regard to all available tools at the EU's disposal, in preparation of its next meeting.

12. The Council acknowledges the need to establish a clearing house/ reserve pool of health experts from member states on voluntary basis for quick and targeted deployment in health crises, welcomes all efforts to enhance medical and pharmaceutical R&D especially on tropical and neglected diseases, and calls for a tailoring of the EU's development cooperation to the specific needs of the countries in the region affected by Ebola in order to strengthen the resilience of their health systems and governance.
  
13. Following the High level co-ordination meeting of Health Ministers held on 16th October 2014, the Council calls on the Commission services, with WHO, to audit the effectiveness of the screening systems at point of exit in the affected countries and to assist in reinforcing them as necessary. It stresses the importance of continuous consultations and information sharing on measures to protect the EU and its citizens. The Council underlines the need to ensure objective information to promote public awareness and preparedness on Ebola, including at all entry points. The Council stressed the importance of more consultations with a view to co-ordinating national measures at entry points and calls on the Commission to lead work which could result in common protocols and procedures as appropriate. It also calls on Member States to consider to use in full the potential of visa information systems and transport carriers' information to anticipate potential arrivals of disease infection. The Council also welcomes Commission's work on the organisation of a workshop on best practices in infection control in healthcare settings, on the setting up of a voluntary network of clinicians for the treatment of Ebola at EU level and on the feasibility of Joint Procurement for protective gear for health professionals treating Ebola patients and possible medical treatment.

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