

Cuba Attends Global Ebola Conference Seeking End to West Africa Outbreak



Brussels, March 3 (RHC) — Cuba will be among participants at an international conference in Brussels today to mobilize a final push to end the Ebola outbreak in West Africa and ensure the delivery of nearly \$5 billion in aid pledges.

The meeting will be presided over by leaders of Ebola hit countries in West Africa. Liberian President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, Sierra Leone President Ernest Bai Koroma and Alpha Conde of Guinea -- the three countries hardest hit by the epidemic -- will be joined by top officials from around the world for the EU-backed meeting.

The conference comes as Sierra Leone's vice president remains in self-imposed quarantine after one of his bodyguards died from Ebola amid a recent spike in cases following a long decline.

"It will be a very difficult and painstaking task," UN Ebola envoy David Nabarro told a briefing on the eve of the conference.

More than 9,500 people have died of the disease since the West African epidemic emerged in southern Guinea in December 2013.

Nabarro said the number of new cases had declined from around 900 a week to 100, but that cases appeared to be climbing back up in the coastal regions of Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Officials from the European Union, China, the United States, Cuba and Australia will be in Brussels alongside the United Nations, the World Bank and other international organizations trying to wipe out the disease in west Africa.

"The purpose of this conference is getting to zero" in terms of human cases, an EU official involved in the talks said separately, but added: "The curve is flattening out, but definitely it is not at zero."

Cuba has been among the most active countries in fighting the lethal disease. The island has sent over 200 medical personnel to affected areas, and has contributed as well in the training of specialists as part of a World Health Organization program.

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