

UN Chief Calls on International Community to Follow ALBA's Lead on Ebola



United Nations, October 21, (RHC), – UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon called on the international community to follow the example of the member nations of the Bolivarian Alliance for the Peoples of Our Americas (ALBA) in the fight against Ebola and praised Cuba and Venezuela for convening an emergency ALBA meeting on the deadly disease.

“I urge countries in the region and around the world to follow the lead of ALBA, particularly that of Cuba and Venezuela, who have set a commendable example with their rapid response in support of efforts to contain Ebola,” the UN secretary general said in a message sent to Monday’s ALBA Summit on Ebola in Havana.

The message was read by the UN Secretary General’s Special Envoy on Ebola, Dr. David Nabarro, who stressed that Ebola is no longer a localized public health emergency.

Dr Nabarro said cooperation and solidarity are essential, and Cuba and Venezuela, with their contributions, have already demonstrated this.

Saying that Cuba's solidarity with other developing countries is well established, Dr. Nabarro commended the Government of the Caribbean island for dispatching a team of 165 medical aid workers to West Africa in early October.

"Cuba's proud tradition of training doctors from developing countries has also helped improve medical care around the world," Dr. Nabarro said.

Cuba plans to send more medical workers soon. Over the years, Cuba has sent thousands of medical workers abroad, including to 39 African countries.

Venezuela has also joined efforts to combat Ebola by contributing \$5 million to the UN Ebola Response Multi-Partner Trust Fund, which supports the needs and requirements of UN agencies, funds and partners working to eliminate Ebola in West Africa.

"Ebola has wide and profound economic, humanitarian, political and security dimensions. We must act decisively to relieve the burden on the people and Governments of Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and stop the spread of Ebola to other countries," said Dr. Nabarro.

Joining the forum via video, Dr. Margaret Chan, the Head of the World Health Organization (WHO), told participants that "you are absolutely doing the right thing. You want to step up your level of preparedness."

"Last month, the Ebola virus moved to your region...to the United States...any country with an international airport is theoretically at risk of an imported case of Ebola," she said.

She thanked Cuba for contributing the much-needed nurses and doctors to affected countries. The staff in their "sparkling white lab jackets brings a most welcome face of hope to what is otherwise a horrific outbreak," Dr. Chan added.

The virus is deadly. The disease is dreadful. People are afraid. At the same time, a well-prepared country can defeat Ebola.

Countries in the Bolivarian alliance need to train their staff, use drills to test performance, get protocols written quickly, get your public and media behind you, engage the community early to fight fear with facts. On its own, protective gear is not fool proof, she said.

The Havana meeting discussed ways to resolve the emergency and halt spread of the virus to regional States.

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