

World Bank chief says Ebola took the world by surprise

September 19 2014

The devastating Ebola outbreak caught the world off guard, World Bank President Jim Yong Kim said Friday as he questioned the international community's readiness to respond to other pandemics.

"This has surprised everyone. None of us thought that Ebola would be looking like it's looking right now," he told reporters in Sydney of the disease which has so far killed more than 2,600 people in west Africa.

"This Ebola crisis of today is unlike anything we've seen before. Already more people have died as a result of this [outbreak](#) than all the Ebola outbreaks in history combined."

Kim welcomed efforts by the United States to pledge military help to combat the outbreak, and said the United Nations was now handling Ebola as if it were "sort of an outbreak of war".

The United Nations Security Council on Thursday declared the outbreak a threat to world peace and called for urgent aid to West Africa, the epicentre of the growing crisis.

Kim, in Australia for G20 finance ministers meetings, said while Ebola could be stopped in its tracks with quality health care, the window of opportunity to really crack down was the next 4-6 months.

"The most important thing though is that it the WHO (World Health Organisation) has to come out with a standardised approach to providing

care," he said, adding that this could come within days.

But Kim said he was also worried about the impact of future pandemics, and ones which could spread more quickly.

"One of the things that we have to do is think about if we had an infectious pandemic, if we had another SARS-like pandemic, would we be ready?" he said.

The World Bank on Wednesday warned of potentially catastrophic economic losses from the outbreak in worst-hit countries Liberia, Sierra Leone and Guinea.

Kim said fear of the deadly Ebola virus was hurting economic activity in West Africa, with people unaffected by the disease pulling back on their work activities in farming, mining and other areas.

But he said with the right medical treatment, the whole narrative around the disease which instils such fear and paranoia could change.

"If we do that, we have no idea what the survival rate is," he told a forum in Sydney.

"The Ebola virus has never run into a modern, first-world health care system. Our own sense is if you get those pretty fundamental basic things in place, then we can have a very high survival rate."

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Citation: World Bank chief says Ebola took the world by surprise (2014, September 19) retrieved 26 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-09-world-bank-chief-ebola.html>

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