

# UN chief: 20 times more Ebola aid needed

October 9 2014, by Connie Cass

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The presidents of three Ebola-stricken West African nations made urgent pleas for money, doctors and hospital beds Thursday and representatives of nations gathered for a World Bank meeting promised to send more aid quickly.

"Our people are dying," said President Ernest Bai Koroma. He spoke by video from Sierra Leone to an Ebola summit at the annual meeting of the International Monetary Fund and World Bank in Washington.

Koroma described devastating effects of "this evil virus"—children made orphans, doctors and nurses dying, an overwhelmed medical system that can't keep up with the need.

The world's response hasn't kept pace with the spread of Ebola, Koroma said, and "a tragedy unforeseen in modern times" is threatening everyone.

United Nations Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon called for a 20-fold surge in international aid to fight the outbreak and representatives gathered for a World Bank pledged medical evacuations for [health care](#) responders who catch the virus.

"For those who have yet to pledge, I say please do so soon," he said. "This is an unforgiving disease."

At the meeting here, President Alpha Conde of Guinea asked for money, supplies, medicine, equipment and training of health care workers.

"Our countries are in a very fragile situation," Conde said through a translator. President Ellen Johnson Sirleaf of Liberia also appeared by videoconference to seek a rapid increase in aid.

World Bank President Jim Yong Kim endorsed pledges Thursday from the United States and United Nations to guarantee medical evacuations for [health care workers](#) responding to the crisis, an effort to ensure that enough doctors and nurses are willing to risk their lives to help stop the disease. No details were given at the meeting.

Kim also said that more hospitals and local health centers must be built quickly to ensure that West Africans have faith that they can get the care they need in their own communities, and no longer fear that Ebola centers are places where people go to die.

That is also the best way to stop the spread of Ebola into other nations and to counter the fear that magnifies its economic damage, Kim said.

"Trying to block your borders or isolate those countries in some way is not going to work," he cautioned other nations.

Kim, a doctor who formerly led the World Health Organization's global AIDS treatment program, said studies of past disease outbreaks, such as the SARS virus, show that 80 percent to 90 percent of the economic impact comes from "the fear factor that surrounds the outbreak."

A World Bank report this week estimated that the economic toll of the largest Ebola outbreak in history could reach \$32.6 billion if the disease continues to spread in West Africa through next year.

"Every dollar spent now may well be worth more than \$20 or \$30 spent in two months' time," said David Nabarro, the U.N. special envoy on Ebola.

The World Bank has committed \$400 million to the three nations, and the International Monetary Fund is providing \$130 million in emergency financing. The IMF stands ready to do more, said Managing Director Christine Lagarde, adding that the Ebola crisis presents a rare occasion when it's good for nations to take on more debt.

The United Nations has estimated it will cost nearly \$1 billion to stop the Ebola outbreak.

The U.N. and individual countries are sending money and aid, including troops coming from Britain and the United States to build treatment centers. Koroma said more help is urgently needed, requesting more than 5,000 doctors, nurses and medical support staff and 1,500 patient beds for Sierra Leone.

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Citation: UN chief: 20 times more Ebola aid needed (2014, October 9) retrieved 30 April 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2014-10-chief-ebola-aid.html>

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