

EU seeks \$1.27 billion in Ebola aid for W. Africa

October 20 2014, by Raf Casert



British Foreign Minister Philip Hammond, right, speaks with Italian Foreign Minister Federica Mogherini during a round table meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg on Monday, Oct. 20, 2014. European Union nations

are working to find funds to help fight Ebola in West Africa and streamline a common approach in dealing with the health crisis. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

The European Union committed itself Monday to step up efforts toward getting 1 billion euros (\$1.27 billion) in aid to fight Ebola in West Africa and rejected the idea of halting direct flights coming from the region.

The EU foreign ministers set off a week of continentwide action with a pledge "to play an active role in enhancing the international response" to Ebola, which so far has been late and insufficient to contain the deadly virus that has claimed at least 4,500 lives.

British Prime Minister David Cameron wants a two-day summit of the 28 EU leaders ending Friday to reach the \$1.27 billion aid threshold, agreeing on a variety of topics from more financial aid to common repatriation procedures, more Ebola treatment facilities and better training for health care workers.

"It's time to act now ... if we want to limit the amount of cases to an amount that is controllable," said Roberto Bertollini, the World Health Organization's representative to the EU.

So far, the overall anti-Ebola total for the EU, including EU national contributions, stands at 500 million euros (\$640 million), with Britain contributing 160 million euros (\$204 million). The Netherlands also promised to send a frigate to West Africa to help, matching a similar contribution from Britain.

"Money is very important, equipment is very important, staff is very important," said EU foreign policy chief Catherine Ashton.

Still, EU ministers rejected the idea of scrapping flights from West Africa to keep the virus out of Europe.

"Instead of going to Brussels or to France, (West African) passengers would go to Dubai or elsewhere and come in from there," French Foreign Minister Laurent Fabius said. "We would no longer be able to check anything."



Dutch Foreign Minister Bert Koenders, center, arrives for a meeting of EU foreign ministers in Luxembourg on Monday, Oct. 20, 2014. European Union nations are working to find funds to help fight Ebola in West Africa and streamline a common approach in dealing with the health crisis. (AP Photo/Virginia Mayo)

In Spain, officials said nursing assistant Teresa Romero appears to have beaten Ebola but won't be considered virus-free until she is tested again Tuesday. She was among those treating a Spanish missionary who died

of Ebola on Sept. 25.

Officials also said 15 others linked to Romero had no Ebola symptoms.

A Norwegian doctor, infected with the Ebola virus while working in Sierra Leone, has also been cured, according to Oslo University Hospital. Silje Lehne Michalsen, 30, was evacuated from Sierra Leone to Norway on Oct. 7, two days after it was confirmed she carried the virus.

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