

Ebola battle far from over: UN mission chief

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West Africa still has a long way to go to beat Ebola, the United Nations' outgoing Ebola mission chief said Friday.

"I think the response has been successful but we have a long way to go," Anthony Banbury, head of the UN Mission for Ebola Emergency Response (UNMEER) said, warning of an "epic battle" still ahead to control the spread of the virus.

At a press conference in Ghana on the eve of his departure for New York, Banbury said he was confident that the number of Ebola cases would start to fall in the early part of 2015.

"But two cases here and three there presents a grave threat to any community or country," he said, urging the world not to turn its attention from the outbreak until it was completely over.

The latest figures from the World Health Organization, which were published Wednesday, put the death toll from Ebola in the three worst-affected countries—Sierra Leone, Liberia and Guinea—at 7,890 out of 20,171 cases.

Banbury, who is American, leaves west Africa this weekend to take up a new UN position.

The American will be succeeded by Ismail Ould Cheikh Ahmed, a Mauritanian diplomat who has held various top UN development posts.

UNMEER is leading international efforts to beat back the deadliest Ebola outbreak in history.

It is based in Accra, Ghana.

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