

WHO: Ebola no longer world health emergency

March 29 2016, by Krista Larson



In this Saturday, March 7, 2015 file photo, health workers prepare to collect the ashes of people that died due to the Ebola virus at a crematorium on the outskirts of Monrovia, Liberia. As Liberia marks the second anniversary Wednesday of its first confirmed Ebola cases, many neighbors say they want to see the crematorium torn down so they can try to forget that terrible time. (AP Photo/ Abbas Dulleh, File)

The World Health Organization said Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa no longer qualifies as an international health emergency,

although it cautioned that male survivors can infect their sexual partners for up to a year after recovering.

The decision by WHO's Ebola emergency committee comes following flare-ups that emerged in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone after authorities declared virus transmission over. The new cases sometimes were publicized only hours after the public announcements were made.

"Complacency at this stage would be completely wrong," said Robert Steffen, the committee's vice chair.

The announcement puts an end to the international emergency declaration that has been controversial. An Associated Press investigation found that WHO initially delayed making the declaration—similar to an SOS signal—on political, economic and religious grounds.

Tuesday's announcement also comes as the organization fights the Zika virus that has prompted concern in the Americas. Steffen said the battle against Zika in no way dictated the committee's decision to declare the Ebola emergency over.

While there have been flare-ups of new cases, health authorities said Tuesday those were not linked to the original chains of transmission dating back to December 2013.



Professor Robert Steffen, left, Vice Chair of IHR Emergency Committee regarding Ebola, Margaret Chan, center, General Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Bruce Aylward, right, Executive Director of WHO and Health Emergencies speak to the media after The International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on Ebola, during a press conference, at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, March 29, 2016. The World Health Organization said Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa no longer qualifies as an international health emergency even as it cautioned that male survivors can infect their sexual partners for up to a year after recovering. The decision made by WHO's Ebola emergency committee comes after flare-ups have emerged in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone after authorities there declared virus transmission over. The new cases sometimes were publicized only hours after the public announcements were made. (Salvatore Di Nolfi/Keystone via AP)

"We know that little clusters will continue to flare up. That will be normal life just as in previous decades, there have been every now and

then, outbreaks of Ebola in various parts of sub-Saharan Africa," Steffen said.

More than 11,000 people have died mostly in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone since December 2013. There are currently no known cases in Liberia or Sierra Leone, though Guinea recently reported two confirmed and three probable cases. Authorities are now monitoring nearly 1,000 contacts of the sick.



Margaret Chan, left, General Director of the World Health Organization (WHO) and Bruce Aylward, right, Executive Director of WHO and Health Emergencies Director-General's Special Representative for the Ebola Response, speak to the media after The International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on Ebola, during a press conference, at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, March 29, 2016. The World Health Organization said Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa no longer qualifies as an international health emergency even as it cautioned that male survivors can infect their sexual partners for up to a year after recovering. The decision made

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China's Margaret Chan, General Director of the World Health Organization, WHO, speaks to the media after The International Health Regulations Emergency Committee on Ebola, during a press conference, at the WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, Tuesday, March 29, 2016. The World Health Organization said Tuesday that the Ebola outbreak in West Africa no longer qualifies as an international health emergency even as it cautioned that male survivors can infect their sexual partners for up to a year after recovering. The decision made by WHO's Ebola emergency committee comes after flare-ups have emerged in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone after authorities there declared virus transmission over. The new cases sometimes were publicized only hours after the public announcements were made. (Salvatore Di Nolfi/Keystone via AP)

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