

Ebola vaccines to be shipped to Congo, WHO chief says

May 11 2018, by Saleh Mwanamilongo

Ebola vaccines will be shipped as quickly as possible to Congo as the number of suspected cases in the latest outbreak grows, the head of the World Health Organization said Friday as the agency prepared for a "worst-case scenario."

WHO Director-General Tedros Ghebreyesus in a Twitter post said the agreement was made in a phone call with Congo's health minister on Thursday. WHO still needs Congo's final authorization, which is expected in the coming days, Dr. Peter Salama, the agency's emergencies chief, told reporters in Geneva.

Two cases of Ebola have been confirmed in the latest [outbreak](#) in a remote northwestern part of Congo. There is no specific treatment for Ebola. A new experimental vaccine has been shown to be highly effective, though quantities are currently limited.

Congo's health minister on Thursday announced the first death since the outbreak was declared early this week, though the hemorrhagic fever blamed for the death has not been confirmed as Ebola. Nine other suspected cases were announced Thursday.

On Friday the director of Bikoro Hospital in Equateur Province, Dr. Serge Ngalebato, announced one more suspected case there.

"The problem here is that we already have three separate locations that are reporting cases that cover as much as 60 kilometers and maybe

more," Salama with WHO said. "We have three [health care workers](#) infected and one who has been reported as of yesterday as having died. And we know that [health](#) care workers can really be an amplification factor for these kinds of outbreaks.

"And we know the number of suspected probable and confirmed [cases](#) is significant. So we are very concerned."

While the risk of the latest outbreak spreading into other countries is low, nine nearby countries have been put on high alert, Salama said.

It is "absolutely a dire scene in terms of infrastructure" as medical teams try to contain the outbreak in a region with poor water and sanitation, few paved roads and little electricity, he said.

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Citation: Ebola vaccines to be shipped to Congo, WHO chief says (2018, May 11) retrieved 3 May 2024 from <https://medicalxpress.com/news/2018-05-ebola-vaccines-shipped-congo-chief.html>

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