United Nations Secretary General’s International Ebola Recovery Conference

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As Prepared for Delivery

Mr. Secretary-General, Your Excellencies, Administrator Clark, Ladies and Gentlemen.

It’s a pleasure to have the opportunity to join you today.

I want to commend the Secretary-General for hosting this important conference.

And I would like to thank President Conde, President Johnson Sirleaf, and President Koroma for their leadership during this crisis. Let me also acknowledge the incredible resilience of the people of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone.

Today, these three countries face a dual challenge. First, the Ebola epidemic stubbornly continues. We cannot let up on efforts to get to – and sustain – zero cases everywhere.

But at the same time, for most people, normal life is resuming, and recovery is already underway.

Recovery, though, is not enough. With the support of the international community, Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone must build back better, stronger, and smarter than before.

And one critical area will be helping the countries build back their health care workforce. We released a study yesterday that shows the loss of health workers due to the Ebola epidemic in West Africa could result in an estimated additional 4,000 deaths of women each year across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone – all because of complications in pregnancy and childbirth. This loss of health workers could push maternal mortality up to rates last seen in these countries a generation ago.
We know that these countries must dramatically increase access to essential, quality health care in even the most remote areas, and bolster the capacity of communities and community health workers to serve as the front line for disease prevention and response. We must strengthen the entire health system to achieve universal coverage and end preventable deaths.

We will help lay the groundwork toward these goals on Monday at the Third International Financing for Development Conference in Addis Ababa, where the Secretary-General, President Johnson Sirleaf and I will be joined by many of you to launch the Global Financing Facility for Every Woman Every Child – or GFF. The GFF will give countries a new model for financing development beyond 2015, aligning and leveraging resources from international donors, the private sector, and domestic resources in innovative ways to accelerate investments in the health of women and children.

We also know that the economic impact of Ebola has been staggering for the three countries, with sharp declines in GDP growth in 2015 and risk projected to persist into 2016. A successful economic recovery will require not only adequate financing, but also economic diversification, improved governance, and stronger public administration.

The World Bank Group is already supporting investments in these critical areas. We announced in April that the World Bank Group has committed at least US$650 million dollars over the next 12 to 24 months to support recovery and development needs in the three countries.

This amount is in addition to the US$1 billion dollars that we had previously committed for Ebola emergency response and early recovery efforts.

In line with the countries’ own recovery plans, we have put our funding into five priority areas: health system strengthening, agriculture, education, cash transfers and other social protection programs, and lifesaving infrastructure such as electricity, water and sanitation, and roads.

Our funds also will be used to help develop a regional disease surveillance system across West Africa to prevent or quickly contain a future epidemic or pandemic.

Ebola showed that the world is woefully unprepared for the next pandemic. Now many experts and policymakers are calling for a faster, more agile and effective response for when the next epidemic strikes.
The World Bank Group is working with WHO and an array of public and private sector partners to develop a global Pandemic Emergency Financing Facility, which will ensure that resources can flow more swiftly in the event of another deadly outbreak. Last month, G7 leaders meeting in Elmau, Germany, asked us to accelerate the design of this facility.

We expect to have the design ready later this year, to inform the G20 and the UN High-Level Panel.

In closing, we must face the various challenges for the three countries with strong conviction in the weeks and months ahead. We must not let up until we end this deadly epidemic once and for all. We also must stand with the people of Guinea, Liberia, and Sierra Leone and make investments that produce a sustainable recovery. And, as a global community, we must pledge to do whatever it takes to make sure such a preventable crisis never happens again. Thank you.