



4 November 2014 -- In the context of the collective efforts of WHO and Member States for stepping up preparedness and readiness of the health sector for EVD, and in view of the threat of its introduction and the possible social and economic consequences, WHO has urged countries to rapidly assess and measure their level of preparedness and readiness for Ebola and accordingly identify critical gaps for improvement. To this effect, 13 countries of the Region are receiving expert assessment missions to assess on the ground national preparedness and enhance operational readiness for EVD in each country as a highest national priority.

This initiative is in line with WHO's mandate. It follows the in-depth discussions that took place during the sixty-first session of the Regional Committee, recently held in Tunis, which concluded by agreeing on deployment of teams of experts to different countries of the Region.

According to the agreement, the Regional Office would be ready to provide support by sending a team of experts to work collaboratively with national experts, United Nations Country Teams and other relevant partners to assess national preparedness and readiness measures for Ebola.

The objectives of the assessment are to identify the gaps in the preparedness and response

plans, specify actions to be taken to address and fill these gaps, and make use of the capacities of some countries that have already succeeded in responding to similar issues.

To this end, WHO has developed a set of preparedness checklists for assessing operational readiness measures for Ebola.

“Deployment of assessment missions is a very important initiative. It is not only about EVD preparedness and response as such, but expected to have important impact on preparedness for all other major public health threats in general,” said Dr Ala Alwan, WHO Regional Director for the Eastern Mediterranean. “Recent experience has clearly indicated that as much as early detection of any case of EVD is critical, rapidly putting in place an appropriate response and public health containment measure remain equally important for limiting spread or further local transmission of the virus”.

Since March 2014, west Africa has been confronted by an unprecedented EVD outbreak. The more this epidemic remains uncontrolled in west Africa, the greater the risk of introduction of the virus in countries of the Region, principally by international travel of air passengers coming from these countries. However, it is also conceivable and possible that the virus may be spread by travellers using other points of entries such as sea-ports and ground crossings.

Two assessment missions have already been conducted in Morocco and Somalia. Other missions are heading to Afghanistan, Bahrain, Djibouti, Egypt, Islamic Republic of Iran, Iraq, occupied Palestinian territory, Pakistan, Sudan and Yemen.

### **Related link**

[Resources to support national preparedness efforts to fight Ebola](#)

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