Ebola Sector Budget Support Fight Back Programme Signing Ceremony

Delivered at the African Development Bank Headquarters

Donald Kaberuka
President of the African Development Bank Group

Abidjan, 1 October 2014
Honorable, Madame Nialé Kaba, Minister attached to the Prime Minister of Côte d’Ivoire, in charge of Economy and Finance,

Her Excellency Olga Siradin, Ambassador of Guinea to Côte d’Ivoire,

His Excellency Johnny A. McClain, Ambassador of Liberia to Côte d’Ivoire,

Her Excellency Khadijatu Bassir, Ambassador of Sierra Leone to Senegal,

Distinguished guests.

I have the pleasure to welcome you to the African Development Bank Headquarters to sign Loan agreements and Grant Protocols amounting to a total of 100.2 million units of account – representing about USD 151 million, as budget support to help the republics of Côte d’Ivoire, Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone in controlling the Ebola epidemic, mitigating its socio-economic effects and enhancing their preparedness.

This programme is the third of a series of Bank support to the countries affected by the epidemic. The Bank approved a first grant of USD 3 million in April 2014 and a package of USD 60 million in August 2014, comprising a 56 million dollar operation and four emergency operations of USD 1 million each for Guinea, Liberia, Sierra Leone and Nigeria.

The situation has dramatically evolved since August 2014. Over 6,000 cases and 3,000 deaths are now registered. During that time, the world also realised that the Ebola epidemic impacts the economy of the most affected countries and beyond. Extractive and other industries in the most affected countries have been hit. In Liberia, farmers did not plant because of the epidemic. There is also some evidence that the Bank takes seriously, because they reveal the global nature of the epidemic’s impact: cancellation of hotel bookings in African touristic slots are reported and the crisis is affecting the economy of other continents, as is the case for the rice value chain in Thailand, which exports rice to the sub-region.

Unfortunately, the situation worsens quickly and shows that the enemy is stronger than we thought, and that we have to devote all our energy to fighting it back. The magnitude of Ebola cases and deaths is frightening. Projections of GDP growth become uneasy to compute and are being revised every day. The epidemic impacts public finances, because of expenses that were not planned at the time national budgets were prepared, and because the epidemic is currently affecting government revenues, especially fiscal. This is why the Bank proposed budget support as the instrument to use for this third round of support. The millions we spend today might be billions saved tomorrow.

Côte d’Ivoire has no Ebola case and must remain Ebola-free. With the role played by the country in the regional economy, this is absolutely vital for the post-crisis recovery we all hope for.

To a large extent, the Ebola epidemic surprised all of us. When it started we were not conscious of the multifold effects it would have should it develop. One of these effects is on nutrition and food security, which affect the population beyond those infected by the virus.

This crisis revealed the weaknesses of health systems. In particular, it confirmed the centrality of the health workforce, which is at the forefront of the fight but is globally insufficient in the region and will deserve more investments in the future. The Ebola epidemic is an eye opener and invites us to learn lessons for the future, because other epidemics may hit us again. There is a need to diagnose the reasons why the epidemic expanded to that extent, and identify remedies.
The Ebola Fight Back Programme has long term ambitions. We need, together, to leave something behind in the form of strengthened capacity to handle similar events in the future and avoid they reach the currently observed scale. This is why the programme includes policy measures for both the short and longer terms.

Ministries of Health have been designated as programme executing agencies, but the matters at stake are not only for them to deal with. As you have seen, the programme also calls upon other key ministries, including Finance, Agriculture and ministries in charge of gender. The list is not exhaustive and I encourage you to ally with any institution you deem fit in your respective countries.

The Bank will support you in implementing the programme. During programme negotiations, we have started a policy dialogue with your governments around the programme’s measures. We will continue to share our experience and accompany you in national reflection processes towards the establishment of strengthened systems and enhanced nutrition and social protection.

As we proceed to signing programme Loans Agreements and Grant Protocols, particular attention needs to be given to disbursement. In this regard I am inviting you, if it has not been done already, to expedite the submission of evidence of the fulfilment of disbursement conditions for the first tranche of budget support.

Ladies and Gentlemen

We hope that our collective commitment will help to overcome this scourge and save Africans population from the risk of being affected by the Ebola Virus Disease.

With these words, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen, I would like to share my hopes and expectations that in a few months from now, the Ebola crisis will be behind us and affected countries will have retrieved the economic development trajectories which were theirs before the virus spread over the region.

Together, “Let us make Africa an Ebola Virus-free continent”

Thank you for your kind attention.