

10 September 2014

To: Ministers responsible for ports and shipping; port authorities and shipping companies

We are facing a public health emergency of international concern. The outbreak of Ebola virus disease is unprecedented in its size, severity, and complexity. This is an extraordinary outbreak that requires extraordinary measures for containment. Extensive and comprehensive mobilization of the international community is needed to support the affected States in responding to the outbreak.

Keeping the communication lines with the affected States open and accessible is of paramount importance for strengthening the public health response and protecting national economies, including travel, trade and tourism. Any measure implemented by a national authority needs to be well informed by the nature of the disease itself and well grounded in the applicable international instruments and obligations of States under the International Health Regulations.

In accordance with the advice and recommendations of the Emergency Committee under the International Health Regulations, World Health Organization **does not recommend any ban on international travel or trade.**

The fear surrounding the Ebola outbreak is understandable. However, lives are being unnecessarily lost because delivery of life saving equipment and supplies is being delayed. Measures ranging from delayed provision of necessary authorizations and clearances to restrictions on port entry seriously hamper the effectiveness of relief operations and could ultimately lead to increased suffering and death of people in the affected countries.

We know the mode of transmission of Ebola and how to stay protected. We have efficient measures to detect individuals who develop symptoms consistent with the Ebola virus disease and prevent further transmission. These measures are consistent with the International Health Regulations and are being put in place by many countries.

We urge you to ensure that any existing or future measure which imposes restriction on movement of ships and cargoes is commensurate with and restricted to public health risk. The World Health Organization and the International Maritime Organization are ready to support you in responding to the challenges posed by this major public health emergency.

Yours sincerely,



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