

Response to MSF's open letter, appealing to the UK Government for further support on Ebola (Updated: October 2014).

October 2014

I share MSF's concerns about the serious health, social and economic risks posed by the largest ever outbreak of Ebola. MSF is right to call for the entire international community to do more to assist.

The UK is already taking a leading role in responding to the Ebola outbreak.

Recognising the severity of the crisis and the urgent need to support the response in Sierra Leone, the UK Government has pledged a further £100m to lead and underwrite the provision of 700 beds for Ebola patients, and will work with partners to provide and train the international staff and support needed to operate them. This includes the UK's existing commitment to provide a medical treatment centre for victims of the Ebola outbreak in Sierra Leone, which will be set up by British military and humanitarian experts. The initial phase of the facility will be constructed and operational within eight weeks. British military personnel arrived to survey and assess the site on 10 September. Based near the capital Freetown, the facility will treat victims of the disease, including local and international health workers and medical volunteers. MSF is right that deployments such as this are a crucial part of the response.

This is in addition to over £25 million of British funding which is supporting the global effort to contain this disease. This includes £5 million of new direct funding and around £20 million of UK support through commitments to multilateral institutions and the EU.

UK funds are helping to fill critical gaps in the front-line response by providing technical staff, emergency supplies, equipment and training in specialist care. Through UNICEF, we are also supporting improved communication on the outbreak in Sierra Leone, including through radio messaging and public

announcements, so communities better understand the disease and can take steps to prevent its spread.

However, the UK cannot fight Ebola alone with just a few international partners such as the US, and the scale of this crisis requires the whole international crisis to act. We will continue to play our part in the global response and encourage others to do the same.

I hope that this has been helpful and thank you for writing on this important issue.

JUSTINE GREENING