

**STATEMENT ON EBOLA VIRUS DISEASE BY HONOURABLE JOHN BOYCE,
MINISTER OF HEALTH, THURSDAY, 7 AUGUST 2014, AT THE MINISTRY OF
HEALTH, AT 9:30 A.M.**

As you are aware, cases of Ebola Virus Disease have been reported in four West African countries. According to the World Health Organization, this outbreak is by far the largest in the forty year history of the disease.

Ebola virus disease is a serious, usually fatal, disease for which there are no licensed vaccines or treatments. But for people living in countries outside Africa such as Barbados, it remains a very low threat. There are no cases of Ebola in Barbados.

The Ministry of Health will continue to monitor the outbreak in West Africa through the World Health Organization's Event Information Site, as well as to step-up surveillance at ports of entry. Environmental Health Officers and Port Health Nurses will be conducting surveillance to identify any persons with symptoms so that the necessary precautions can be taken at an early stage to contain the spread of disease.

Members of the public should be aware that the likelihood of catching Ebola virus disease is considered very low unless you've travelled to a known infected area and had direct contact with a person with Ebola-like symptoms, or had contact with infected animals or contaminated objects.

Barbados has a sound public health system with trained staff in infection control measures necessary to contain any cases of infectious diseases, such as Ebola.

The Ministry of Health will strengthen its preparedness measures to ensure that we are able to respond effectively, if the need arises. This includes sensitisation and training of health care workers to update them on Ebola and to ensure that they are equipped with the knowledge and skills they need to protect the public and themselves.

And of course the dissemination of information to general public is a critical aspect of our preparedness effort. The Ministry of Health will be communicating with the public on a regular basis to keep them informed of what is being done and to enlist their cooperation. I want to enlist the support of the media in this effort. I also want to urge members of the public to follow the public health guidance that is given by the Ministry of Health.

In closing, let me reiterate that there are no cases of Ebola in the Caribbean and that Barbados is under no immediate threat. However, as a responsible Ministry, it is necessary to inform the public of what is taking place and of our preparedness plan in the event that we have to respond to the current Ebola situation. I also want to recommend to Barbadians who may be contemplating travel to West Africa at this time that they should defer that trip unless it is absolutely essential.