

**Remarks by H.E. Mr. ESTIFANOS Afeworki, Ambassador of the State of Eritrea and Dean of the African Diplomatic Corps, Japan National Press Club November 21, 2014**

Ambassador Norio MARUYAMA, Director General of the African Affairs Department, Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Japan,

Mr. Kazuo MIYATA, Japan National Press Club,

Excellencies and Colleagues,

Members of Press Corps present,

Ladies and gentlemen,

As we all know, present day science and medicine have made tremendous progress and accomplishments in protecting humanity from threats of continued epidemics caused by the migration of unknown virus, bacteria, fungi and protozoan microorganisms to human beings from wild plants and animals and their habitats. The recent outbreak of Bird Flu and SARS in Asia and secondary cases elsewhere in the world can be mentioned as example. Unfortunately, the ominous danger posed by series of attacks of unknown and known species of microorganisms on human beings as well as lack of universal access to medicine and science still remain a great challenge. The Ebola virus is one of these challenges. It causes an acute, serious illness which is often fatal if untreated. Ebola virus disease first appeared in two simultaneous outbreaks in the tropical forests of Africa in 1976.

According to the latest situation report of WHO, a total of 14 098 "confirmed, probable, and suspected" cases of Ebola virus disease have been reported in six affected countries (Guinea, Liberia, Mali, Sierra Leone, Spain and the

United States of America) and two previously affected countries (Nigeria and Senegal) up to the end of 9 November, 2014. There have been 5160 reported deaths. Hence, as we witness today, science and medicine have failed to curb this disease which was identified and reported before 42 years.

As we speak, authorities and scientists have been mobilized from all over the world to keep the disease from spreading out to all other countries including those who are hit internally. As a result of these, various programs have been extended currently to the affected countries Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone and globally. World Health Organization (WHO) and the international community have continued to redouble their efforts to find a fundamental solution to this disease including but not excluding the development of a vaccine.

Despite this situation and other limited assurances of successful treatment of the disease, the public, all over the world, are panicking and overreacting gripped with fear. The spill over of this fear is curtailing the service that could be rendered by medical workers in this emergency. This surge of overwhelming anxiety and fear is leading to other political, social and economic problems. It has triggered movement of people, cargo and mail to withdraw or be curtailed from normal activities. It is also affecting trade by adversely affecting the global movement of people, cargo and mail to/ from Africa.

On the other hand proper safety net mechanisms are being put in place not only by the countries affected but by all other countries, all over the globe, including by the other 50 African countries - because these deadly virus has no color, creed, race or national flag. These fundamental scientific approach and efforts, I believe, are capable to reduce, if not eliminate, the current situation of panic as well as to regain the control of the current epidemic.

Your Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen, the African Diplomatic Corps here

in Tokyo believe that this global panic attacks can be cured and the sooner we seek mechanisms to cope with it, the better. Media, art, music etc. are important mechanisms that must be used to increase understanding, vigilance, awareness of the public to desist spreading fear and to express solidarity and sympathy to those people who have fallen victim to this deadly but curable disease. Therefore, ceasing this occasion of this conference on Ebola today, I would call upon the press corps in Japan to play a positive role.

I would also like to express, on behalf of the African Diplomatic Corps in Tokyo and myself, our profound gratitude and thanks to the Government and people of Japan for the support provided to combat the Ebola outbreak in Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. Medicine, science, public solidarity and media-power of Japan have been availed and mobilized to help keep the disease under control and to help the countries and people currently affected by this epidemic.

Without much ado and with this short note, let me ask the Ambassador of the Republic of Guinea H.E. Mr. Senkoum SYLLA and the Ambassador of the Republic of Liberia H.E. Ms. Youngor TELEWODA to take the floor to explain the current situation of the outbreak and challenges faced in their respective countries and west Africa.

Thank you