Accra, 03 July 2014 – The **Emergency Ministerial meeting** on **Ebola Virus Disease** (EVD) has ended today with Health Ministers agreeing on a range of priority actions to end the Ebola outbreak in West Africa. The scale of the ongoing outbreak is unprecedented with reports of over 750 cases and 445 deaths in Guinea, Sierra Leone and Liberia since March 2014.

In a Communiqué issued at the end of the two-day meeting, the Ministers agreed that the current situation poses a serious threat to all countries in the region and beyond and called for immediate action. They expressed concern on the adverse social and economic impact of the outbreak and stressed the need for coordinated actions by all stakeholders, national leadership, enhanced cross-border collaboration and community participation in the response.

Speaking at the closing session, the World Health Organization's (WHO) Regional Director for Africa, Dr Luis Sambo commended the Ministers and said: "We have adopted an inter-country strategy to tackle this outbreak. It's time for concrete action to put an end to the suffering and deaths caused by Ebola virus disease and prevent its further spread".

In spite of the ongoing efforts to tackle the outbreak, there was consensus that a number of gaps and challenges remain. These relate to coordination of the outbreak, financing, communication, cross border collaboration, logistics, case management, infection control, surveillance, contact tracing, community participation and research.

The World Health Organization will establish a Sub-Regional Control Center in Guinea to act as a coordinating platform to consolidate and harmonize the technical support to West African countries by all major partners; and assist in resource mobilization. The delegates also underscored the importance of WHO leading an international effort to promote research on Ebola virus disease and other hemorrhagic fevers.

The Ministers adopted a common inter-country strategy which highlights the following key priority actions for the affected countries:

- Convene national inter-sectoral meetings involving key government ministries, national technical committees and other stakeholders to map out a plan for immediate implementation of the strategy.
- Mobilise community, religious, political leaders to improve awareness, and the understanding of the disease
- Strengthen surveillance, case finding reporting and contact tracing
- Deploy additional national human resources with the relevant qualifications to key hot spots.
- Identify and commit additional domestic financial resources
- Organise cross-border consultations to facilitate exchange of information
- Work and share experiences with countries that have previously managed Ebola outbreaks in the spirit of south-south cooperation

The delegates also urged partners to continue providing technical and financial support and work with WHO to effectively coordinate the response. In an effort to promote regional leadership, and highlight the seriousness of the outbreak, the delegates strongly recommended that the forthcoming Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) Heads of States summit addresses the issue of EVD outbreak.

In March 2014 Guinea notified WHO about cases of Ebola virus Disease. The cases were initially confined to rural Guinea with the epicenter being Gueckedou. What started as a rural outbreak has now spread to Conakry the capital of Guinea as well as cross border spread into Sierra Leone and Liberia. The current Ebola outbreak has surpassed all other outbreaks in terms of cases, deaths and geographic spread across Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone.

In an effort to interrupt further spread of this virus in the shortest possible time, the World Health Organization convened an Emergency Ministerial meeting in Accra, Ghana from 2-3 July 2014 involving eleven (11) countries mostly from West Africa and a number of key international partners involved in the Ebola outbreak response. The aim of the meeting was to discuss how to contain the disease, share experiences and agree on a strategy for an accelerated operational response to bring an end to the outbreak.