

By Agnes Kyotalengerire

Uganda must urgently respond to each Ebola case if it is to avoid the high numbers that DR Congo is grappling with, the health ministry's permanent secretary, Dr Diana Atwine, has appealed.

Atwine said DR Congo is grappling with an exponential number of confirmed Ebola virus patients because there was a delay in detecting the disease.

"We need to be fast in whatever we are doing because each Ebola patient can have a multiplier effect," she said.

She made the comments on Saturday at Speke Resort Munyonyo during a high-level meeting on cross-border coordination on the Bundibugyo Ebola virus outbreak in DR Congo.

The meeting was held under the theme: *Regional Solidarity, Preparedness and Co-ordinated Response*.

Organised by the World Health Organisation (WHO) and the Africa Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC), the meeting attracted senior officials and technical experts from the health ministries of Uganda, DR Congo and South Sudan to discuss solutions to the Ebola epidemic.

Atwine welcomed cross-border efforts to curb the spread of the disease.

"It is good they have welcomed us. We are going to cross over to DR Congo and work on the mechanism with the health teams," Atwine noted.

As of yesterday, seven cases had been recorded in Uganda, according to data from the health ministry.

Uganda roots for urgency in Ebola response

PHOTO BY MARIA WAMALA



Atwine (right) makes her remarks as Kadilli (left) and another official listen during the meeting to strengthen cross-border containment and surveillance strategies aimed at curbing the spread of Ebola at Speke Resort Munyonyo in Kampala

The first case was confirmed on May 15, after a 59-year-old Congolese man who had crossed the border to Uganda died of Ebola in a Kampala hospital on May 14.

The Ebola Bundibugyo virus was last seen in Uganda in 2007-2008 and in DR Congo in 2012. The current outbreak was first reported on May 5, 2026, through social media reports of an unusual cluster of deaths in Mongwalu Health Zone, Ituri Province in eastern DR Congo.

The province is characterised by high population mobility, active mining activity and frequent cross-border movements towards Uganda. The area has registered over 800

BETWEEN THE LINES

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cases and over 200 deaths.

WHAT OTHERS SAY

The director general of Africa CDC, Dr Jean Kaseya, said the Ebola Bundibugyo virus response must be

interconnected because epidemics do not respect borders.

"We do not want to see a third or fourth country affected. We do not want to see this outbreak expand further across our continent or beyond. The time to act is now," he noted.

UNICEF's regional director for eastern and southern Africa, Eteva Kadilli, highlighted the urgency in the response.

Luke Thompson Thon Teny, minister of health of the Republic of South Sudan, described the meeting as timely.

To advance the collective agenda of the Ebola response, Teny said there

is a need to institutionalise real information sharing using platforms.

"We cannot afford delays reporting alerts or suspected cases," he noted.

The WHO representative, Maria Roseline, who is the regional emergency director, said the regional leadership is critical, but on the ground control is ultimately implemented at community health zone and district levels.

Roseline further noted that countries should also continue sharing capacity where needed, including laboratory expertise.

"If the laboratory is available in Uganda, there is no need for the Congo to set up a second one on the same border. Logistics should also share technical support and operational experience," she said.

Kaseya commended President Yoweri Museveni and Uganda for accepting to host the regional incident management support and coordination hub in Kampala.

"This is exactly the kind of regional solidarity and collective responsibility we need to advance Africa's health security and sovereignty agenda," she said.

Through this arrangement, Kampala will serve as an important operational coordination platform bringing together the Africa CDC, WHO, UNICEF, health ministries and various humanitarian organisations supporting this response.

The incident commander at the health ministry, Dr Henry Kyobe, described the development as a good thing for the region and Uganda as a country.