He added: "This conversation will not

stays permanent for long.

WHO declares Ebola outbreak in Congo

BY REUTERS

KINSHASA. The World Health Organisation (WHO) at the weekend declared an Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo and Uganda a 'public health emergency of international concern', posing risks to neighbouring countries.

The WHO said the outbreak, caused by the Bundibugyo virus, does not meet the criteria of a pandemic emergency, but that countries sharing land borders with the DRC are at high risk for further spread.

The UN health agency said in a statement that 80 suspected deaths, eight laboratory-confirmed cases, and 246 suspected cases had been reported as of Saturday in the DRC's Ituri province across at least three health zones, including Bunia, Rwampara, and Mongbwalu.

The DRC health ministry had said on Friday that 80 people had died in the new outbreak in the eastern province.

The 17th outbreak in the country, where Ebola was first identified in 1976, could in fact be much larger, given the high positivity rate of the initial samples and the increasing number of suspected cases being reported, the WHO said.



The outbreak is "extraordinary" as there are no approved Bundibugyo virus-specific therapeutics or vaccines, unlike for Ebola-Zaire strains, it said. All but one of the country's previous outbreaks were caused by the Zaire strain.

The DRC-Uganda outbreak poses a public health risk to other countries, with some cases of an international spread already documented, the WHO said.

Bundibugyo virus-disease contacts or cases should not travel internationally, unless as part of a medical evacuation.

The DRC's dense tropical forests are a natural reservoir for the Ebola virus. The often-fatal virus, which causes fever, body aches, vomiting, and diarrhoea, spreads through direct contact with the bodily fluids of infected persons, contaminated materials, or persons who have died from the disease, according to the Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention.

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