

Statement by Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management Christos Stylianides on the end of the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo

The World Health Organisation has today declared the Ebola virus outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo to be over. These are welcome news.

Today our thoughts are with the victims and the brave health workers who fought on the frontline against this dangerous virus in the Democratic Republic of Congo.

It is testament to our immediate collective action and cooperation that this outbreak did not turn into an enormous epidemic.

From the very early stages of the outbreak, the European Union was at the forefront of efforts to treat those affected and to contain the virus. The European Union worked hand-in-hand with the World Health Organisation, the Congolese authorities and international aid organisations to take action.

The EU mobilised all the emergency response instruments at our disposal: we supported our humanitarian partners with life-saving interventions, provided logistic support through our humanitarian air service, and deployed experts to the country.

Through our Civil Protection Mechanism, we also provided medical equipment, while our satellite mapping system Copernicus produced maps of the affected areas.

New vaccines, used in DRC against Ebola, were developed with the help of EU research grants. As the EU Ebola Coordinator, I am very pleased that our rapid and strong collective response helped save lives.

As we reflect on the achievement to halt this outbreak, we must continue to remain vigilant and be prepared. Our experience in West Africa in 2015 and DRC this year have shown that there can be no complacency concerning health threats.

Background

When the first Ebola cases were reported in the city of Mbandaka within days of the initial alert in early May 2018, it was clear that this outbreak had an enormous potential risk.

This ninth outbreak of Ebola in the DRC had 53 cases: 38 confirmed and 15 probable. 29 people died and 24 persons recovered. Over 1 700 contacts of

potential/suspected Ebola cases were followed for 21 days each, 21 days being the incubation period of the virus. 3 330 people were vaccinated. More than 130 000 travellers were screened at ports, major markets, airports, etc. in the DRC and the affected province of Equateur.