

KIGALI — The World Health Organization (WHO) Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus has warned that the Ebola outbreak in the Democratic Republic of Congo (DRC) is spreading faster than health workers can contain it, cautioning that the epidemic is likely to get worse before it gets better.

The crisis is being severely hindered by ongoing conflict in the country's Eastern and Southern Provinces. Ahead of his arrival in the DRC on Wednesday to coordinate relief efforts, Tedros took to X (formerly Twitter) to paint a bleak picture of the situation.

"Eastern DRC now faces a catastrophic collision of diseases and conflict with the Ebola outbreak in Ituri Province outpacing the response," Tedros stated. "Frontline workers are risking everything, while attacks on health facilities make tracking cases and their contacts nearly impossible. We cannot build community trust or isolate the sick while bombs are falling. We urge all warring parties to agree to an immediate ceasefire to contain this outbreak."

The WHO confirmed that the suspected death toll now stands at 220, with more than 1,000 suspected cases.

According to the WHO chief, response teams are facing three critical hurdles that complicate containment. First, an initial delay in detecting the outbreak means health officials are "playing catch-up with a very fast-moving epidemic." Second, there is currently no approved vaccine or treatment for this specific strain, the Ebola Bundibugyo virus.

Finally, a deep-seated distrust of outside authorities among local populations has already ended in two violent attacks on health facilities in DRC.

"Stopping this Ebola transmission depends entirely on humanitarian access," Tedros noted, warning that neighboring countries are at an especially high risk. "Yet ongoing clashes are driving mass displacement, pushing exposed contacts into overcrowded camps and severing critical containment corridors."

The regional fallout has been swift, despite explicit guidance from global health body. When the WHO declared the outbreak a Public Health Emergency of International Concern on May 17, it stated that "no country should close its borders or place any restrictions on travel and trade," arguing such moves are "implemented out of fear and have no basis in science" and risk driving the

movement of people to unmonitored, informal crossings.

Nonetheless, neighbors have moved aggressively to seal their frontiers:

Authorities in Rwanda have temporarily closed the border with the DRC. Prosper Mulindwa, the Mayor of Rubavu District, confirmed the indefinite closure of the checkpoints linking Goma and Rubavu-Gisenyi. "The borders connecting Goma and Gisenyi have been temporarily closed in response to the Ebola outbreak. We will continue engaging with our residents to explain why this decision was made," Mulindwa said. Local media reports indicate health authorities continue to screen Rwandans crossing from the DRC, as well as returning Congolese citizens, under strict monitoring procedures.

Authorities in Kampala shut Uganda's borders with the DRC on Wednesday with immediate effect. The decision, handed down by Vice President Jesca Alupo's Ebola task force, followed a rise in Ugandan health workers being exposed to the virus by Congolese patients who crossed over before the outbreak was officially declared in mid-May. On Saturday, Uganda's Ministry of Health confirmed three new cases of the virus, bringing its national total to five.

Uganda Permanent Secretary in the Ministry of Health Dr. Diana Atwine said on X, "All media houses are required to dedicate at least thirty (30) minutes of prime-time programming daily to public education and sensation on Ebola.

"Schools in border districts shall remain open; observe all healthy operating standards for twenty-one days. The other resolution include a ban/suspension on mass gathering including; music concepts, entertainment shows, festivals, rallies and marathons as well as public celebrations.

The Africa Centres for Disease Control and Prevention (Africa CDC) has since issued a stark warning that 10 African nations are now at risk of being affected. Africa CDC chief Jean Kaseya listed the vulnerable nations as Angola, Burundi, Central African Republic, the Republic of Congo, Ethiopia, Kenya, Rwanda, South Sudan, Tanzania, and Zambia.

The crisis has also triggered stringent travel and sports restrictions across the Atlantic.

Last week, the United States escalated its border controls, temporarily banning

green card holders from entering the country if they had been in the DRC, Uganda, or South Sudan within the previous 21 days. Previously, U.S. citizens, nationals, and green card holders were exempt from a broader 30-day travel ban.

“We cannot and will not allow any cases of Ebola to enter the United States,” US Secretary of State Antony Rubio said.

The restrictions are directly hitting sports. Andrew Giuliani, executive director of the White House Task Force for the World Cup, told ESPN on Friday that players on the DRC’s national football team, The Leopards, must isolate for at least 21 days before traveling to the US.

The DRC is one of the 10 African nations that qualified for the tournament, which is being jointly hosted by the U.S., Mexico, and Canada. The Leopards are currently scheduled to play Portugal in Houston in their opening match on June 17.

Meanwhile, the *Wall Street Journal* reports that discussions are underway between the US and Kenya to establish a quarantine facility in Kenya for American citizens exposed to the outbreak. The Kenyan government has not yet approved the plan, and the exact location remains unconfirmed.

Amidst the growing caseload, an American physician working in the DRC, identified as Dr. Peter Stafford, has tested positive for the virus. He has been evacuated to Germany for treatment and is reportedly not critically ill. His wife, who is also a doctor, and their four children have all tested negative.