The Ebola epidemic that was reported in a few localized countries has now become a matter of increasing concern worldwide. According to the November 14, 2014 WHO report, there were 14,413 reported Ebola cases in eight countries since the outbreak began with 5,177 reported deaths. Case incidence continues to increase in Sierra Leone and transmission remains intense in Guinea and Liberia. A total of 4 cases, including 3 deaths have been reported from Mali.

The Ethiopian Academy of Sciences (EAS) and the Ethiopia Public Health Association jointly express their solidarity with the people and nations of western African counties severely affected by the Ebola epidemic. This is a sad moment to the families and communities that have lost their beloved ones from sudden death associated with Ebola Virus Disease (EVD). We also recognize the huge impact of the epidemic exerts in dismantling social and economic fabrics of the affected countries.

We are aware of the live saving efforts taken by health workers at various levels to provide the require care, including emotional and psychological support to patients affected by EVD. There audacity and unreserved commitment to their profession in face of a highly contagious and fatal disease is be admired and need to be duly recognized.

EAS and EPHA acknowledge the rapid action taken by the Government of Ethiopia to prevent and control EVD as deemed necessary domestically and regionally and its commitment to stand along with the international community in the response affected countries have launched. The financial assistance and plans to swiftly deploy health workers by the Government Ethiopia to support countries most affected by Ebola have highly been appreciated by the international community. While commending the health workers who have volunteered to go to the affected areas and help, we strongly suggest that all required safety measures for the health workers be in place, procedures and protocols maintained while traveling back and forth from these countries, communities they will be serving well sensitized and stigmatization guarded against.

We strongly believe that awareness creation is one of the major strategies to prevent the spread of Ebola and combat the epidemic. In this regard, as EAS and EPHA will continue to avail themselves to the general public, the Federal Ministry of Health and other concerned institutions including international NGOs and CSOs to collaborate on health promotion and education campaigns to sensitize and educate health workers health workers, families and the general public, particularly those at a risk contracting the infection. We do recognize that his must be done to encourage decisions and actions based on facts and evidences and in manner that will not spread unnecessary fear and panic among the community. We feel work has been initiated to raise community awareness through education and sensitization targeting different audiences. Much remains to be done and awareness creation using different channels including the social media and distribution of materials in different languages need to be widely circulated in the community.
The Ethiopia Academy of Sciences and EPHA will continue encourage scientists, professional groups and innovators to scale-up their work on Ebola to fill the gap in knowledge and technology by unraveling the nature of disease, and enhancing vaccine development and treatment modalities based on science and evidences thereof. EAS and EPHA will continue informing, sensitizing and educating their membership on Ebola. The members at large will get engaged to play key roles in the surveillance activities nationwide and at various levels to support ongoing concerted effort at national level and vehemently support the government’s effort to prevent Ebola and vigilantly prepared to withstand any challenges that may arise.

Measures need to be taken or strengthened promptly to ensure preparedness in terms of surveillance, case detection, diagnostic capacity, emergency response, provision of appropriate medical care, monitoring and evaluation, and reporting systems. Provision for medical care and intervention should to be taken side by side with human catastrophe and disaster (hazard) management. Health facilities at all levels should be ready to mobilize the community and other stake holders to handle emergency situations. Ebola response road map need to be worked out in advance based on lessons learned from already affected countries and guidelines issued to support health facilities in case of such emergencies.

All concerned government and non-government organizations including CSOs have to speak out with a collective voice for collaborative efforts to combat Ebola. Professional associations and CSO need to work hand in hand with the government in the national effort to intensify the prevention activities and control measures. Strengthening public health systems, including by allocating budget for emergency preparedness needs special consideration. EAS and EPHA appreciate the financial and technical support initiated by WHO, WFPHA/AFPHA, Australian Public Health Association and some bilateral agencies as part of their solidarity with Ebola affected countries.

We at EAS and EPHA are committed to contribute to the national effort by mobilizing the required professional expertise and provide technically support as deemed necessary. We also take this opportunity to call upon other professional associations, development partners, and all other stakeholders to get engaged in the national effort.

LET US PREVENT EBOLA!!