

Costa Rica Chairs Regional Meeting in Cuba to Discuss Ebola Preparedness



Havana, October 29 (RHC) — Members of the Community of Latin American and Caribbean States (CELAC) are meeting in Havana for two days to discuss a coordinated emergency response to the potential arrival of the Ebola virus in the region.

ALBA countries — especially Venezuela — had urged Costa Rica, which currently heads CELAC, to devise a comprehensive regional plan to prevent the virus from spreading to the continent.

Costa Rica's acting Foreign Minister Alejandro Trejos on Tuesday evening confirmed the participation of all 33 CELAC members in today's meeting.

The Costa Rican delegation, which includes experts from the Health Ministry and the Social Security System, traveled to Cuba on Tuesday, led by the ministry's director of health surveillance, María Ethel Trejos.

Specialists from the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) and officials of the Cuban Public Health Services also will attend the meeting.

ALBA countries last week agreed to outline an Ebola action plan that emphasizes prevention and assistance to Caribbean countries. They also commissioned technical experts to draft an action plan for regional health ministers by November 5th.

Experts at the meeting will present their countries' strategies for containment of the virus and hold working groups to draft specific emergency guidelines.

Four committees will focus on diagnosis, treatment, surveillance, patient management, awareness campaigns and training.

A PAHO expert with recent experience in Liberia, Africa, is in Costa Rica this week providing training to public health care workers and conducting an evaluation of the country's protective equipment.

The World Health Organization reported 10,141 Ebola cases this month in eight countries; 4,922 patients have died from the deadly virus.

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