

SADC won't impose travel ban on Ebola hit W.African nations

VICTORIA FALLS, Zimbabwe

THE 15-member Southern African Development Community said on Monday it will not impose travel ban on Ebola hit West African countries, as the international community taking measures against the spread of the deadly virus.

As countries around the globe step up prevention, borders of neighboring countries are closed and airlines suspend flights to the affected region, executive Secretary Stergomena Lawrence Tax said they would not ban travellers from the affected area or restrict flights. Executive Secretary Stergomena Lawrence Tax told Xinhua on the sideline of the 34th Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government that efforts the regional bloc has taken are meant to boost readiness of its member states, ranging north to south from Democratic Republic of Congo to South Africa, west to east from Angola to Mauritius.

"We have encouraged member states first of all to be alert, secondly to put in place mechanism to be ready in case of an outbreak," Tax said. "We want people to know that it is a threat, but not a threat that prevents people from doing what they should do. Just to stay alert."

There has been not a single case of Ebola reported in the SADC region, since Ebola epidemic first broke out in Guinea in March and then spread to Sierra Leon, Liberia, and Nigeria, claiming more than 1,000 lives.

Chairperson of the SADC Council of Health Ministers and also Zimbabwean Minister of Health and Child Care David Parirenyatwa said the region's major focus at the moment is on encouraging the containment of the virus at source, here it is prevention, screening, prevention and educating people on Ebola.

Parirenyatwa said SADC health ministers

have agreed that passengers at every international airport in the region should be screened to pick up people who have been to the affected countries, but member states are at different stages of implementing the policy, he said.

Meanwhile, Zimbabwean President and the new chairperson for the 15-member regional bloc Southern African Development Community (SADC) Robert Mugabe said Monday that he will seek more Chinese investment to fund priority projects in southern Africa. Responding to a question from Xinhua at a press briefing held at the end of the 34th Summit of SADC Heads of State and Government in the resort town of Victoria Falls, Mugabe said he will court Chinese assistance particularly for infrastructural development and value addition projects in the region during his upcoming visit to China.

According to the 2014 United Nations Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) world investment report, the SADC economy received foreign direct investment worth 13 billion US dollars in 2013, up from 4.5 billion US dollars in 2000. As the figure grows, China has emerged as one of the biggest FDI sources in southern Africa. Most Chinese investments are in the mining, energy and infrastructure sectors.

In Zimbabwe alone, China has been the country's top source of foreign investment for years. Chinese companies, led by Sino-Hydro, have bagged all of the country's major power projects with combined investment over 1.5 billion US dollars.

A communiqué issued after the two-day summit says industrialization should take center stage in SADC's regional integration agenda and the ministerial task force is mandated to develop a strategy and road-map for industrialization.