

# WHO calls emergency talks on Ebola outbreak

Accra, Wednesday

HEALTH ministers from 11 African countries are meeting in Accra, Ghana, in an attempt to "get a grip" on the deadly and worsening Ebola outbreak.

So far, 763 people have been infected with the virus - and 468 of these have died. Most of the cases have been in Guinea where the outbreak started.

But it has since spread to Liberia and Sierra Leone and is now the biggest and most deadly Ebola outbreak the world has seen, say officials.

Health officials from those

countries, as well as Ivory Coast, Democratic Republic of Congo, Gambia, Ghana, Guinea Bissau, Mali, Senegal, and Uganda will attend the meeting.

The World Health Organization says "drastic" action is needed to stamp out the virus and ensure it does not spread to other countries in the region.

"We're hoping to take decisions about how to enhance collaboration and responses [of these countries] so we can get a grip and halt this outbreak," said WHO spokesman Daniel Epstein

"We need a strong response,

especially along the shared border areas where commercial and social activities continue between Guinea, Liberia and Sierra Leone. That's unlikely to stop."

The WHO says travel restrictions are highly unlikely, and in any case unenforceable. These are porous borders where people travel freely to see family and friends.

Ebola kills up to 90% of those infected. There is no vaccine or cure. It spreads through contact with an infected person's bodily fluids.

The way to stop an outbreak

is to isolate those who have it and ensure no-one else is exposed. Medical staff are following up on hundreds of people who have had contact with infected patients. They have to be closely monitored for 21 days before they can be given the all clear.

Ebola is a haemorrhagic fever, which can start suddenly with the onset of high temperature, diarrhoea and vomiting. Some people fight the virus and survive, but most do not. They start bleeding internally and externally and eventually their organs shut down.