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# Guinea Opposition Leader Says Slow Ebola Action Hurts Investment

by Alan Bjerga

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(Bloomberg) -- Mismanagement of Guinea's response to the Ebola epidemic will hurt the nation's economy by hindering future investment, opposition leader and a former prime minister, Cellou Dalein Diallo, said in Washington.

Misspent funds and a slow response to the outbreak has put the nation at a disadvantage compared with Nigeria and Senegal, which mobilized quickly and effectively, Diallo, head of the Union of Democratic Forces of Guinea, said Tuesday in an interview at Bloomberg News's Washington office.

"Ebola will further impede investment" stifled by corruption and a lack of transparency in business, Diallo said, speaking through a translator. "Mismanagement has been part of the reality of government in Guinea. Because of it, contracts aren't signed and investments aren't made."

The nation's ambassador to the U.S. dismissed Diallo's comments as election-year rhetoric.

Guinea is one of three West African nations hardest-hit by an Ebola epidemic that has infected more than 22,000 people and killed more than 8,700, including 1,900 in Guinea, according to the World Health Organization. While the pace of new infections is declining, the risk of international spread remains high, the WHO said last week.

Diallo's remarks are election-year politics ahead of votes planned this year, Mamady Conde, Ambassador of Guinea to the U.S., said in a telephone call.

## Ebola 'Solidarity'

"We really hope all political leaders in our country and around the world be in solidarity in the fight against Ebola," the ambassador said. "We do not think this is a moment for any argument around the way this epidemic has been handled."

At its peak, WHO reported about 350 cases a week in Liberia, 550 in Sierra Leone and 175 in Guinea. Money to fight the virus will run out next month, the WHO said Jan. 23. In a best-case scenario, the epidemic will end

by mid-year, the organization said.

Diallo, 62, is a former prime minister who held several cabinet-level positions. In Guinea's 2010 presidential election, Diallo led all candidates in the first round, then lost to Alpha Conde with 48 percent in a runoff marred by violence and allegations of voting fraud.

Diallo, who met with State Department officials and supporters on Capitol Hill on Tuesday, questioned whether the Oregon-sized nation has adequate funds to hold free and fair elections without international support. Electoral fraud would promote civil unrest and potentially lead to bloodshed, he said.

The Ebola outbreak shouldn't delay the elections, President Conde said last month during a briefing with United Nations Secretary General Ban Ki-moon in Guinea's capital, Conakry.

Guinea, on Africa's west coast hugging the Atlantic Ocean and bordered by Senegal, Liberia, Sierra Leone, Guinea-Bissau and Mali, holds the world's largest iron ore deposits and is the biggest exporter of bauxite.

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