Calls for improved security to support Ebola response and end outbreak https://www.who.int/news-room/detail/01-12-2019-who-director-general-praises-bravery-of-health-workers-during-visit-to-eastern-democratic-republic-of-congo-following-fatal-attacks-on-ebola-responders

1 December 2019 |Goma - World Health Organization Director-General Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus today visited health workers affected by recent armed attacks on Ebola response staff that killed four outbreak responders and injured seven others in the eastern Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC). Dr Tedros called for improved security in the region to protect health workers trying to contain Ebola.

"I came here today to stand side by side with you, my sisters and brothers, and commend you all for your compassion and bravery in this most trying of times," said Dr Tedros during a visit to Goma, the capital of North Kivu province. "You have put your lives on the line to protect the health and wellbeing of others."

"I have also come here to recommit my steadfast support, and that of the World Health Organization, to the affected communities of this region and to the government of the Democratic Republic of the Congo, to bring the Ebola outbreak under control."

Dr Tedros told responders that "ending the outbreak cannot be done without a much stronger effort to improve your security. We call on those responsible for security to recognize your extraordinary efforts by making a greater commitment to your security."

On the night of 27 November, unidentified armed attackers launched two separate attacks on a camp housing Ebola outbreak response staff in Biakato Mines and on the Ebola coordination office in Mangina. These were the latest in a series of similar incidents this year, during which WHO has documented approximately 390 attacks on health facilities that have killed 11 and injured 83 health care workers and patients in DRC.

But despite the disruptions, WHO and humanitarian partners in eastern DRC have committed to continue their Ebola response operations. Since the start of the outbreak in August 2018, over 3300 people have contracted Ebola, some 2100 of whom have died. In recent weeks, there has been an encouraging decline in the number of people confirmed with the virus.

In Goma, Dr Tedros met and thanked Ebola responders who are in hospital recovering from injuries suffered in the 27 November attacks. "You are working to save lives and you get attacked -- this is wrong," he said.

Dr Tedros also met with National Ebola Coordinator Steve Ahuka and expressed solidarity with and support for the Government and people of the DRC, noting, "We won't give up and we will finish the job."

Later, Dr Tedros and Professor Ahuka met with DRC Ministry of Health, WHO and other responders, including those evacuated following the violence, paying tribute to their selflessness and persistence. Several responders recounted their experiences of being confronted by the attackers and stressed their commitment to working to end the Ebola

outbreak in memory of their fallen colleagues.

"You cannot face Ebola and bullets without commitment, and that's why I am so proud of you," Dr Tedros said. “Even though we shouldn't give up, your security must be ensured." Across the eastern DRC outbreak zone, WHO continues to support activities throughout the affected areas.

“There can be no more callous act than to target health professionals working to heal the sick and care for those in need,” he added. “Every time an attack like this happens, it disrupts efforts to contain the Ebola outbreak and puts the health and wellbeing of local men, women and children at greater risk.”

“Such senseless violence must stop.”