BRAZZAVILLE/28 February 2019 –The World Health Organization (WHO) is deeply concerned about the recent attacks on the Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF)-run Ebola treatment centres on 24 February in Katwa and on 27 February in Butembo in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. Such attacks are deplorable for their immediate impact on lives and for the risk of spreading the disease further. They are profoundly disrespectful of the dedicated work of local, regional and international responders.

Following the most recent Butembo attack, WHO and partners are working to ensure the safety of the patients and staff. Patients have been transferred to the Katwa transit centre, which WHO is expanding to house and treat these additional patients. It is a priority of the response to ensure quality clinical care for the patients. Staff on the ground are also working to follow up with the four convalescent patients who sought shelter elsewhere during the violence.

MSF reported that their staff were safe. Likewise, WHO staff in the area are all accounted for. However, security services did experience casualties.

These attacks have occurred in areas with ongoing transmission of Ebola in the community and could lead to increases in transmission and result in more hardship for the local community. The violence and disruption to the treatment centres also make it difficult for Ebola responders to carry out field work.

WHO teams on the ground continue to work tirelessly to respond to the challenges. WHO is working closely with our partners to determine appropriate action to ensure the overall Ebola response is maintained. Working with the Ministry of Health and our partners, our priority continues to be to end the outbreak.