GENEVA - The World Health Organization (WHO) deplores the bombing of a clinic run by Medecins Sans Frontieres (MSF) in Kunduz, Afghanistan, and extends its sincere condolences to the families and colleagues of those killed and injured. This represents a major loss for MSF and the affected community - to whom WHO offers its sympathy and support - and a serious challenge to humanitarian work in Afghanistan.

WHO once again urges all parties in the conflict to respect the safety and neutrality of health workers and health facilities. Tragedies like this can and should be avoided, by warring parties consistently observing International Humanitarian Law and taking all necessary precautionary measures.

In 2014, governments agreed on a landmark resolution at the United Nations General Assembly, urging States to take urgent steps to ensure that health workers in all countries are protected from violence, whether in armed conflict or in times of peace.

Health workers continue, however, to face mounting threats, particularly in Iraq, Syria, and Yemen.

WHO calls on all governments and military officers to observe their obligations under international law and to ensure the protection of health services in conflict – a time when they are most needed.