

Opening remarks by the Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Emergency Relief Coordinator, Mark Lowcock, at the UN General Assembly High Level Side Event on Preventing Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Sexual Harassment in the Humanitarian Sector

New York 26 September 2018

As delivered

Excellencies, ladies and gentlemen,

Thank you very much all for being here this morning. Thank you specially for braving the weather, I know there has been a lot of it to brave this morning. Because this is an extremely important and actually quite urgent topic that we are addressing today.

And we have got lots of you who I know who want to contribute to the discussion and quite a bit of update that we on this side of the table will like to provide you with. I am really thrilled to be doing this in partnership with the UK, with the Secretary of State for International Development, Penny Mordaunt, and maybe I can hand over to you to get us going.

Let me reinforce that fighting the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment is an absolute top priority as I think you will know for the Secretary-General in the UN. And we have a sort of four-part strategy for inside the UN's action. Firstly, and you are going to hear more about this - putting the people who suffer from this scourge first and at the front of our minds and our thinking; second, ending impunity and again we will talk to you more about that; thirdly, engaging civil society and external partners; and then fourthly, improving our communications for education and transparency.

We are seeing some progress. We have had 95 Member States now who have signed up to the Voluntary Compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse. But we need to be clear - there are grave violations. And we need a determined, enthusiastic, energetic, and long-term commitment to really get into the roots of the problem. It is also important to note that this is a sector-wide challenge we face, every big

organization, institution and part of society has this problem. But we also have it in the humanitarian sector. And, so one of the things we have been doing is taking our action beyond the UN family because this is a problem that affects us all and which needs to be tackled collectively. And so at the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC), at the principal's level -and some of my colleagues at the committee will update you on this - we took some sector-wide actions, firstly to make it much harder for perpetrators to move from one organization to another; secondly, to strengthen our investigatory capacity and we are bringing out our heads of investigation in the next month or so to bolster their collaboration.

We have also created a fund, which I am financing from my office to finance more investigations. And we have a recognition and Henrietta (Henrietta Fore, Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund) and Filippo (Filippo Grandi, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees) are going to speak at this - we need a long-term agenda at the IASC, which is complementary to the UN's activity.