



112th IOM Council meeting
General debate – speaking time: 5 minutes
Joint Statement on behalf of the Geneva group of friends to eliminate sexual harassment

Thank you Chair,

The Netherlands is pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the Geneva Group of Friends to eliminate sexual harassment.

This Group of Friends is a member state-led platform designed to spur discussions and coordinate actions in different multilateral fora towards the elimination of sexual harassment as well as sexual exploitation and abuse (SEAH), and to support ongoing efforts by international organizations, agencies and programmes in Geneva in this regard. We seek to promote awareness, prompt policies and frameworks, and support effective follow-up throughout the UN system through collective activities including events, advocacy and collaboration among stakeholders. We invite other member states to join this Group and work together towards the eradication of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.

IOM is active in more than 100 countries, with over 590 Country Offices and Sub-offices worldwide. For example, through IOM's crisis response, more than 4.6 million people were assisted with shelter and NFI assistance, and over 21.5 million people were reached with WASH programming in 2020. Comprehensive responses are provided at all phases of crisis, in the most vulnerable environments. It is unacceptable that sexual exploitation, abuse, and sexual harassment continue to occur at alarming rates, and organizations should actively work to mitigate risk factors, especially amongst those persons facing intersecting



and compounding forms of discrimination who are more likely to experience violence. We welcome the work that IOM undertook to ensure continuity of programming and the efforts of staff during the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic has exacerbated the risk factors behind SEAH and it is important robust strategies are in place to identify, prevent, mitigate and respond to SEAH risks.

It is in those environments where offences are easy to hide, where tensions are high, and where power differentials create reliance or dependence, where risks of occurrence of sexual misconduct are particularly high, and where careful monitoring is difficult. We therefore welcome the We are all-in platform, that allows victims and survivors of sexual misconduct to send a confidential, encrypted report to the Office of the Inspector General. We are curious to learn more about the ways in which IOM will work to ensure that the voice of victims and survivors of sexual misconduct can be amplified, even in those situations where they are at risk of remaining invisible. We also welcome the creation of the *Prevention of and Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment Unit*, which will strengthen and coordinate IOM's global PSEAH response.

Numerous projects by IOM are carried out in close partnership with implementing partners each year. Though those partners are crucial for IOM's delivery in the field, it is accompanied by certain risks, for example regarding coordination, training, and accountability. In this regard, we are encouraged by IOM's commitments on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse, including its leading role in the development of the IASC '[Saying No to Sexual Misconduct](#)', learning package for partner staff and the encouragement of implementing partners to follow these trainings. With regard to accountability, we urge IOM to raise awareness on sexual and gender-based harassment in all its forms, continue ensuring appropriate disciplinary action, and to continue to take steps that will ensure uniform assessments and monitoring are in place, including of implementing partners. We strongly support the work of the Office of the Inspector General and welcome the recent creation of a new head of investigations. Capacity and financing must keep up with caseloads.



The importance of awareness-raising and training for the efficient prevention and treatment and response to of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment cannot be overlooked. We look forward to hearing more about the results of and reflections on IOM's mandatory training package on Preventing Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. We also strongly encourage IOM to look into the inclusion of "sexual harassment" into the training package, for the reason that sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment all share common underlying factors and drivers.

Finally, we call on IOM to continue to work closely with IASC partners and the CEB Taskforce for the development and sharing of effective tools and mechanisms that prevent re-employment of transgressors.

Considering that this Council is taking place during the "16 days of activism against Gender-Based Violence", we thank IOM and its staff for their commitment, and urge IOM to continue its strong interagency engagement, and appeal to all UN-organisations to develop a joint approach when it comes to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including on investigations. We invite IOM to engage further with its Member States, *including prompt reporting of incidences of SEAH*, and keep them fully and regularly informed of IOM's efforts to tackle sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, for example by a briefing on IOM's PSEAH Strategy that was established to guide the Organization in strengthening PSEAH commitments and their implementation.

Sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment violate human rights and are incompatible with the core values of the United Nations. Further joint action towards the elimination of SEAH is crucial, both as a moral and political responsibility. We stand together for zero tolerance for inaction.

Thank you



Geneva group of friends to eliminate sexual harassment

1. Albania
2. Argentina
3. Australia
4. Austria
5. Brazil
6. Canada
7. Colombia
8. Costa Rica
9. Croatia
10. Cyprus
11. Ecuador
12. Estonia
13. European Union
14. Fiji
15. France
16. Gambia
17. Georgia
18. Greece
19. Guatemala
20. Ireland
21. Israel
22. Kenya
23. Latvia
24. Malta
25. Mexico
26. Monaco
27. Montenegro
28. Morocco
29. Netherlands
30. North Macedonia
31. Norway
32. Panama
33. Republic of Korea
34. Senegal
35. Spain
36. Thailand
37. United Kingdom
38. United States