Joint Statement

ANNUAL SESSION 2019
Executive Board of UN Women
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Delivered by Deputy Permanent Representative of Ireland

[Introduction]

- Thank you, Madame President. I am delivering this statement on the independent review of UN-Women policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment on behalf of the following cross-regional group of Member States: Albania, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Colombia, the Czech Republic, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Iceland, Israel, Italy, Germany, Hungary, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Latvia, Lichtenstein, Lithuania, Mexico, Morocco, New Zealand, Norway, the Republic of Korea, the Republic of Moldova, Romania, Sweden, Switzerland, Turkey, United Kingdom, United States, and my own country, Ireland.

- This is a long and diverse list, reflecting the strength of support across the world to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. Progress has been made, but we must not be complacent.

[Reflections on the independent review and management response]

- We commend the leadership of UN Women for undertaking this victim-centred independent review of policies and procedures to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. We strongly support the review’s key messages and recommendations for action, and the comprehensive management response. Let me share some key reflections.

- First, on accountability and governance. We welcome your commitment to revise your policy framework, with the goals of consolidation and simplification, and to ensure clarity around roles and responsibilities. This should bring together actions and accountability at all levels, and be aligned with broader system-wide efforts. It should include a clear monitoring and accountability framework with key performance indicators and targets to measure implementation and impact of actions.
• **Second, on communication and outreach.** The review recognises the need for sufficient resources in the field and the need to ensure local anchoring and coordination. We welcome UN Women's commitment to undertake a mapping exercise of existing resources assigned to tackling SEA and SH, and encourage UN Women to ensure this feeds into system-wide mapping, including at country level.

• **Third, on training.** We welcome progress made on developing and strengthening policies, tools and procedures in this area, and the shift to operationalisation. We encourage UN Women to work closely with other UN agencies at the regional and country-office level to coordinate work and ensure training delivers real value in the field.

• **Fourth, on reporting.** It is important to encourage a "speak out culture" and that those making allegations are aware of the mechanisms, formal and informal, and protections available to them. This is particularly important for personnel that are deemed to be more exposed to the risk of SEA and SH.

• **Fifth, on investigations.** We note that, despite an increase in reported allegations for UN Women in 2018, compared to 2017, there have been very few substantive complaints about SEA and SH made through OIOS since they took over as UN Women’s investigation provider in 2018. We know there is underreporting across the system and express our concern that allegations brought to the OIOS are to a large extent assessed as not warranting investigation, or closed on the grounds that they are unsubstantiated. We intend to follow up the approach of the OIOS in this regard. We also encourage UN Women to explore how the UN’s investigation processes function from the perspective of victims.

[Conclusion]

• To conclude, let me reiterate our shared commitment to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

• We welcome the independent review and management response and look forward to receiving an update on implementation and impact of actions at next year’s annual session.