

Joint Statement on the Independent Commission Report on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse during the response to the 10th Ebola epidemic in the DRC

The Governments of Australia, Canada, the European Union and its Member States, New Zealand, Norway, the United Kingdom and the United States of America are deeply concerned by the magnitude of the findings of the report of the Independent Commission charged with investigating allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, by WHO staff and partners during the 10th Ebola epidemic in 2018-2020 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC).

We expect full commitment from the WHO to prevent and address such acts, including through fundamental reforms to the WHO. We respect the courage of the survivors who came forward and spoke out. As Member States, we hold WHO, the wider UN system and partners to account for ensuring: that the individuals affected have access to the necessary physical and psychosocial support they need, that perpetrators are held accountable, and that the appropriate actions are taken to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse now and in the future.

We have been seized by the gravity of this issue and have been in regular contact with WHO on these specific incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse in the DRC from the moment the allegations became known, and we have consistently made our expectations of action and redress clear to the most senior officials of the WHO.

We welcome WHO's expressed commitment to implement the recommendations in the Independent Commission's report. We support the WHO's immediate action to terminate the contracts of presumed perpetrators still in their employment, as well as requiring others to take immediate administrative leave pending further investigations on their roles and responsibilities in these abuses.

As WHO member states, we urge the WHO to initiate an immediate, thorough, and detailed assessment of the institutional policies, operational processes, leadership culture, and circumstances at WHO that allowed this to happen including for cases to go unreported to WHO's leadership and Member States. We will work directly with WHO on the specific steps WHO needs to take to ensure zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and to take a survivor-centered approach when responding to such allegations.

In this regard, we welcome the creation of the interim prevention and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment action plan launched in July this year and encourage WHO to make use of the UN system-wide tools on

the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. We urge WHO to ensure the implementing Task Team has the resources, capacity, and support needed to carry this important work forward.

We will remain closely focused on WHO's management follow-up to this report. We will ensure that the WHO leadership's commitments lead to accountability, increased capability, action, and swift, change. As WHO member states, we are fully committed to support this crucial process going forward without delay.