

Press release: International summit to crack down on sexual predators in the aid sector

Summit's theme to be "Putting People First" – with the focus on preventing abuse and improving support for victims and survivors

Announcements to include new Interpol pilot in Asia and Africa to stop predators using the aid sector as a cover to harm vulnerable people

International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt will call on the global aid community to take action today, saying "enough is enough", as the Department for International Development (DFID) and the international aid sector clamps down on sexual predators abusing the most vulnerable people around the world.

Speaking ahead of the International Safeguarding Summit in London today (Thursday 18 October) Ms Mordaunt said:

This is a pivotal moment. The entire international aid community is in one place, as it looks to change for the better the way the aid sector works.

Our message to sexual predators using the sector as a cover for their crimes is 'Your time is up'.

This summit will consolidate the work we have done to date to tackle exploitation and abuse and we will be announcing concrete practical actions and new law enforcement tools, which will bring about significant changes. We are demanding tough commitments from donors, NGOs and other aid organisations.

We are not complacent. We realise there is much work still to do, but this a moment to say: 'No more'. We have to give the people that we are here to help the protection that they need.

At the summit Ms Mordaunt will announce that DFID and Interpol are launching a pilot to help stop sexual predators from being able to move between aid organisations without being caught.

In addition, the UK will support NGOs, particularly small organisations, to strengthen their systems and processes via a new platform, which will include access to specialist investigators.

The UK is supporting NGOs to test a new passport for aid workers to prove an

individual's identity, provide background information and vetting status. This will make it easier for employers to gather up to date information on applicants.

DFID will also support the UN Victims' Rights Advocate to establish a Victims Statement of Rights. This will provide clear, guidance to organisations on how to put victims and survivors first and improve support.

Ms Mordaunt will announce the new Interpol project, named Operation Soteria after the Greek goddess of safety, will include deploying teams of specialists to two regional hubs in Africa and Asia to strengthen criminal record checks and information sharing between all 192 members, including high risk countries, and help ensure a more robust law enforcement response against individuals.

Interpol Secretary General Jürgen Stock said:

A critical part of Interpol's mission is to protect the most vulnerable members of society from the most dangerous.

This is all the more important when sexual predators attempt to exploit the very people – be it men, women or children – they are supposed to be safeguarding from harm.

International donors, who collectively provide over 90 per cent of global official aid, the UN and International Financial Institutions and will make concrete commitments at the summit.

The summit follows an event in March co-hosted by DFID and the Charity Commission where Ms Mordaunt challenged UK-based international development charities, regulatory bodies and independent experts to drive up standards to ensure the aid sector protects the people it serves. As part of this, DFID put in place new, enhanced safeguarding standards for the organisations the department works with. Today's event will focus on the international community.

Notes to editors:

- The pilot will be led by Interpol, ACRO (The Association of Chief Police Officers' Criminal Records Office) and Save the Children who are coordinating NGO's participating in the project.
- This is a five-year project with an initial one-year phase focused on testing the online platform, which will build on existing Interpol systems. This is a £10 million project, in which the UK has taken a leading role. It will commit £2 million, subject to approvals for the inception phase.
- For more information on the previous safeguarding summit in March visit: <https://www.gov.uk/government/news/safeguarding-summit-statements-by-the-international-development-secretary-and-dfids-permanent-secretary>