

Tidewater Joint Statement on Combating Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in the Development and Humanitarian Sectors

We, the Ministers and representatives of Members of the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, gathered for the 50th Tidewater Meeting in St. Michaels, Maryland,

Recognizing the impact that sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment have had on the international aid community, including the affected individuals and communities we serve, host countries, implementing partners, our organizations, and the stakeholders invested in our work;

Stressing that sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment within international development and humanitarian organizations undermine their legitimacy and credibility, and further, hinder their efforts as a whole, while recalling that proper conduct by all personnel in aid organizations is crucial to the effectiveness of their work, and the successful implementation of their mandate;

Recalling that sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment are deeply rooted in gender inequality, discrimination, and power imbalances, and therefore promoting gender equality in every organization is of utmost importance;

Reaffirming our commitment to preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, and abuse of power more broadly, in the aid community in all its forms, and to holding perpetrators accountable, while realizing the commitment to “do no harm” by protecting the dignity and well-being of survivors and whistleblowers, and ensuring that beneficiaries are at the center of our work and can safely access assistance; and

Recognizing the June 2, 2018, “Whistler Declaration on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in International Assistance” agreed by the G7;

Commit to:

Leading by example to ensure we protect affected populations, our own staff, and volunteers from sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment;

Working towards the harmonization of standards and mechanisms to combat sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, including a revised set of key

principles for codes of conduct that apply to both development and humanitarian sectors, and build on existing standards;

Supporting the efforts of our partners to build local capacity to increase accountability in the aid sector, including through community-based feedback and complaints and response mechanisms to ensure affected populations are aware of their rights, and empowered to report violations;

Creating a culture of accountability that goes beyond institutional commitments and leads to behavioral and cultural change across development and humanitarian programming and organizations;

Working with partners to support a high-level, interdisciplinary review of employment hiring and referencing systems across the aid sector, including putting in place transparent systems for reporting and investigating allegations against employees; and

Sustaining our focus over time to address sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment, avoid duplication of efforts, and demonstrate progress towards meeting these objectives.