

Chair,

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the following 53 countries and regional grouping - Australia, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Chile, Costa Rica, Ecuador, Fiji, the EU and its Member States, Guatemala, Indonesia, Israel, Japan, Maldives, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, New Zealand, Norway, Republic of Korea, Republic of Moldova, Switzerland, Thailand, Ukraine, the United Kingdom, the United States, Uruguay and my own country Canada.

Chair, since January 2018, we have been raising deep concerns about allegations relating to matters of sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, as well as abuse of authority, in regard to WHO activities.

At last week's PBAC meeting, Member States and the Secretariat discussed this issue in a robust and transparent manner.

We expressed alarm at the suggestions in the media that WHO management knew of reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment and had failed to report them, as required by UN and WHO protocol, as well as at allegations that WHO staff acted to suppress the cases.

Adequately preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment requires cultural change across organisations and societies including with a strong focus on gender. It requires strong and exemplary leadership from managers and leaders throughout an organisation with the tone being set from the top.

We thank the Director General for his commitments made to address concerns raised, including:

- Sharing the Independent Commission's terms of reference and convening Safeguarding Units from a group of Member States to discuss, in light of allegations of WHO staff misconduct;
- Improved frequency of updates on the work of the Commission, and in this regard we look forward to the next briefing being convened following its 30 June report;
- The creation of a dedicated standing item on these matters at WHO governing body meetings

We further welcome the Director General's remarks at PBAC that his team will meet with safeguarding units or equivalents of member states, and that WHO is in contact with the UN Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS). We request that WHO update Member States on the proposed handling of the internal staff allegations at the next quarterly briefing in June.

Chair, we heard the Director-General's commitment to culture change across the organisation, so as to adequately prevent and address sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment. We look forward to addressing this transparently and in a manner consistent with a survivor-centred approach, including ensuring appropriate disciplinary action is taken where allegations are substantiated.

On behalf of Member States associated with this statement, we are committed to working closely with the WHO to ensure credible outcomes on this important issue.

We know that WHO staff are working tirelessly to serve the vulnerable, often in demanding situations, and out of respect for them and the people they serve, we must ensure the highest

standards prevail both for a safe and supportive working environment, as well as in the communities they serve.

Thank you chair.