

Speech: International Development Secretary Penny Mordaunt gives key-note speech at the Safeguarding Summit 2018

Those words that we heard earlier this morning should haunt us.

How have we failed, for so long, not to do what we know to be right.

How have we failed to protect.

How have we failed to hold to account.

How have we failed to put people first.

No environment is so chaotic or complex.

No disaster or crisis so horrific.

Or atrocity so heinous.

That the protection of people from the abuse of power becomes unimportant.

It is the most fundamental duty we have, to those we seek to help.

Thank you all for recognising that.

Thank you all for your recognition that, after the Oxfam scandal, we had to grip this issue.

Thank you for all your efforts, commitments and hard work, that have got us where we are today.

Thank you to the Ministers, who were the first to pick up the phone to me, and asked how they could help.

Thank you to the chairs and co-chairs of the NGO working groups who've been working so hard with us to find coordinated solutions. And to the British NGOs who've been so instrumental in driving the initiatives we're unveiling today.

Thank you to Baroness Tina Stowell and the Charity Commission for all the important work they have done. Thank you to the 50 nations who answered our call to lobby the UN, and the convening donors representing 90% of global aid to make real commitments today.

And thank you to all those who've taken a stand. For example, the Chief Executive of the World Bank, who on getting push back on changing the Bank's policy to outlaw its employees purchasing sex, said: "You had the same

response when we banned smoking in the executive offices. You'll get over it, or you'll clear off".

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And we owe particular thanks to the incredible, courageous people who have come forward with their stories. To those such as Asmita and Megan who have championed this cause for so long.

We need to listen to those people, and we need to keep listening – especially when what they're saying is hard to hear.

And I want them to know that they have been heard. And that we've taken their message to those with real power to make change happen – the G7, the international institutions, and ministers from around the world.

You're not alone – and we stand with you.

You guide and drive us as we shape the way the aid world tackles sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment.

And let there be no doubt that that is what we are here to do.

Not just to tinker around the edges. But to fundamentally rewrite the way this sector operates, from root to branch. And all that hard work is going to be consolidated here today.

We've not had these opportunities that we've created over the last six months ever before.

And they will provide the means by which we will clean up this sector.

Thank you all for being here, the agencies, the NGOs, national governments and donors, and the international financial institutions.

Today, our further clear, ambitious commitments, must make a real difference to people's lives on the ground, and put people first.

We need coordinated global action.

If we're really going to change the way aid works, the whole sector has to come together, and that has to be from today.

We have developed initiatives, that will better support survivors and victims, enhance accountability, drive up standards, and strengthen organisations' capacity and capability.

And this means us getting better at four things:

- Preventing abuses happening in the first place.

- Listening to those when abuses happen.
- Responding decisively, and sensitively.
- And learning from each case we deal with.

The first thing I asked my department to do was to hold ourselves up to those high standards.

And I'm not just speaking on behalf of DFID. I'm also speaking on behalf of all UK aid spending. And on behalf of nations representing 90% of global aid spend, through the donor group that we have convened.

This is an unprecedented level of co-ordination, and an unprecedented weight being thrown behind this issue.

First and foremost, we need to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, happening in the first place.

So today I can announce that DFID and Interpol are launching a pilot of a new system to improve background checks on aid staff, and to provide advice to employers on international vetting.

The pilot will also strengthen the criminal databases and vetting systems of national crime agencies around the world, beginning with regional hubs in Africa and Asia.

UK NGOs, with support from DFID, are going to test a passport for aid workers, to prove their identities, provide background information on previous employment, and confirm their vetting status.

And we're also supporting the introduction of a 'Disclosure of Misconduct Scheme' across the NGO sector, to prevent known perpetrators moving around undetected.

At least 15 organisations covering approximately 50,000 staff have already signed up to the scheme.

And we hope that a number of additional organisations will be signed up by December, taking the organisations to 100, covering hundreds of thousands of members of staff.

And today I can also announce that the major international donors are committing to global standards on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

These standards will cover ethical behaviour, recruitment and complaints processes. And they will be backed by stronger due diligence processes, better project monitoring, and tougher language in our funding agreements. All the partners of the major donors will need to meet these new standards.

And on behalf of DFID, I want to provide you with the assurance that partners not meeting those high standards, will not receive UK aid funding.

These initiatives mean that the aid system will be better able to identify high-risk individuals, stop them slipping through the net, and make the big international agencies accountable to the people on the ground.

Second, as donors, we commit to listening to those we serve, including them in the design and monitoring of our aid programmes, break down the barriers to reporting, and we will take those reports seriously.

And we will continue to provide multi-million pound funding for the 'Humanitarian Innovation Fund', which will harness technology to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in the aid sector.

The DEC will also launch a shared reporting hotline for raising concerns in future emergencies, along with a review of how they respond to community feedback – including in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh.

Thirdly, we are committing today that where sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment occurs, we will respond decisively, effectively, and in line with the rights and wishes of those affected.

I can announce that the Charity Commission, in consultation with the NCA, and the National Police Chief's Council, is introducing a standard approach to criminal reporting. This will help us identify and route out cases of suspected abuse in the NGO sector.

And I can also announce that in consultation with victims' rights experts and the United Nations, DFID will be supporting the development of a Statement of Victims' Rights.

This statement will allow people to understand their rights, and have confidence that they can find help if those rights are threatened or violated – without fear of reprisal.

My colleague Lord Ahmad will be making an announcement about related support later today.

And the donor community is also committing to publish relevant information about allegations and confirmed cases, including into annual reports.

And finally, we commit today to learn more quickly in the future, as new evidence and opportunities emerge. While we recognise that great strides have been made this year, we need to be honest that this is going to be a journey.

We need to harness best practice. We need to keep adapting where things aren't working.

So today I'm also announcing the launch with DFID funding of a new Resource and Support Hub which will draw together the latest research, guidance and training to NGOs and others, and provide access to investigators who can support organisations to root out wrongdoing.

And we know that mistakes and wrongdoing can happen anywhere. No-one must be above scrutiny. That is why from today, all donors working on tackling sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment will be subject to regular independent review by the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development.

The donors on whose behalf I am speaking – who represent 90% of the global aid spend – are committed to provide guidance and training to relevant staff.

And we have each committed to having at least one senior champion in our organisations, accountable for work to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment.

We will discuss all these issues at least once a year at board level, and meet as a group of donors within 12 months to check on progress.

And it gives me hope that the donor community has come together in this way.

Not least because it makes me think what else we can do when we put our minds to it.

This unprecedented action will make a deep and lasting change to the way the aid system works, and spell real improvements for the people on the ground.

And I assure you, that you have at your disposal every tool that Britain can offer in this fight.

From the determination of our journalists, who've done so much to bring this problem to light.

To the expertise of our public services and institutions, such as the NCA, who are working tirelessly to build up the capacity of similar organisations around the world – including the ability to prosecute.

But the donor community can't do this on its own, and we need to see the same kind of response from the entire sector.

We need a united front, a coordinated and forceful action.

And later this morning I look forward to hearing from the UN, from UK NGOs, from the private sector, from the development finance and from research organisations, about the commitments they are making to help right this wrong.

We know we are not going to heal all the wounds from today. This isn't a problem we can solve swiftly, but we've made a good start.

Our work – even in just a few months – is having an effect.

Predators are being arrested, and others are leaving the sector.

And if anything, if we do our jobs right, we won't hear about fewer cases. We are likely to hear about more, at least in the medium-term.

The stories that opened our summit won't be ignored anymore.

There will be consequences for those who do harm, and those who allow harm to be done.

Their time is up.

There can be no excuse.

No excuse for dereliction of duty.

No excuse for complacency.

And there can be no place for sexual exploitation and abuse in any sector.

Let alone one which seeks to protect the vulnerable.

Time is up for the predators, and it's time for us to put people first.

Thank you.