

Joint Statement

WHO

78th World Health Assembly

(19 May – 27 May 2025)

Item 24.1 – Prevention of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment

Geneva, 22 May 2025

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Joint Statement

Chair,
Director General,
Excellencies,
Colleagues,

I have the honour of delivering this statement on behalf of Albania, Armenia, Austria, Australia, Belgium, Bosnia and Herzegovina, Brazil, Bulgaria, Canada, Chile, Croatia, Cyprus, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Finland, France, Georgia, Germany, Greece, Hungary, Ireland, Israel, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, Luxembourg, Malta, Mexico, Monaco, Montenegro, Netherlands, New Zealand, North Macedonia, Poland, Portugal, Republic of Moldova, Romania, Serbia, Slovakia, Slovenia, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, Ukraine.

We remain deeply committed to the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment (PRSEAH) across all sectors, including global health. We reaffirm that safeguarding the dignity, safety, and rights of every individual, especially the most vulnerable, is fundamental to effective health systems and upholding the principles of human rights and gender equality. This is crucial when it involves children and adolescents, because of the great impact on their development and health.

We commend the WHO for the steps taken to strengthen prevention measures, enhance accountability, and provide support to survivors. These steps are essential to truly uphold the commitment for gender equality and the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights also internally. However, there is still work to be done to ensure a zero-tolerance culture for all forms of misconduct within the Organization and its operations, especially in fragile and humanitarian settings.

We stress the importance of prevention strategies, a survivor-centered approach, transparency, and the prompt and independent investigation of all allegations. We encourage WHO to continue strengthening whistleblowers protection, improving internal reporting and response mechanisms, and ensuring that processes are timely, impartial, and adequately resourced, especially in these challenging times of reprioritisation. Such activities must also adopt a gender-responsive perspective.

Leadership accountability remains critical. We urge all senior leaders and managers to champion a behavioral culture change, which aims at establishing and maintaining respect, trust, and accountability at every level. We call for robust monitoring of the implementation of the reforms and regular reporting to Member States.

PRSEAH is not just a matter of policies and procedures – it is about real transformation in attitude and organizational culture. We must work together to ensure that the WHO sets the highest standards and leads by example within the whole UN system. We urge WHO to continue sharing lessons learned, tools and best practices with other UN agencies.

We stand ready to support the WHO in fully implementing its commitments and ensuring that the trust placed in the Organization by people around the world is honored and protected.

Thank you.