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*Remarks at the conference Ending Sexual and Gender-Based Violence
in Humanitarian Crises*

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As delivered

Every time I go to the scene of humanitarian crises, I meet and hear about women and girls, and sometimes men and boys, who have suffered from and survived gender-based violence.

Thirty-five years ago, when I first started this sort of work, these issues were barely recognized or acknowledged. They were a hidden horror.

Well, these issues are not hidden any more.

The 100 countries represented in this room, hundreds of leaders from civil society organizations, you are all testament to that. So thank you Norway and especially Ine [Eriksen Soreide] for bringing us together to work out how to identify and acknowledge the issue and what we can do about it.

We basically need money and action to do three things:

Firstly, we have to ensure that our response is survivor-centered. That means engaging with and listening to survivors of abuse. And designing our programmes reflecting what they tell us.

As I have learned from speaking with women survivors recently in the Democratic Republic of the Congo or three weeks ago when I was again in Cox's Bazar in Bangladesh and as Natalia [Kanem] often reminds us, the greatest wound is often the one the doctor cannot see. And we will only develop good programmes if we listen to the people who are the survivors of the problems we are trying to tackle.

The second thing we need to do, is to have a much stronger focus on prevention and especially to address the issues of gender inequality and power relations. If we don't acknowledge what the underlying root causes of this problem are, we are not going to tackle it successfully.

And that requires challenging attitudes and behaviours that condone or accept violence. And let's be honest: this violence is overwhelmingly perpetrated by men. So men, in particular, have to speak up to amplify the voices of survivors. I met men in Cox's Bazar a few weeks ago who were doing just that. We need more role models out there.

We also need to make sure that more money goes to grass-roots women's organizations and the money we raise here, I know - as we have identified in the UN-coordinated appeals and the Red Cross-coordinated appeals – will focus especially on local organizations to amplify the work that they do and the voices they can express.

From the Central Emergency Response Fund and the Country-Based Pooled Funds which my office manages we will allocate more money to this priority. We will also join with Norway in strengthening the capacity through ProCap and GenCap: more experts and expertise to identify the things we need to do in all the places where this is a problem.

Thirdly, we have to do more to hold perpetrators to account. I am asking supportive countries to promise always to be ready to fund investigations into gender-based atrocities. Without evidence and testimony, there can be no justice. Governments need policies that prevent and tackle violence, they need effective laws and they need to enforce those laws.

One of the women I listened to in Cox's Bazar told me that when men and women come together, we will see change. That should be our motivating principle.

Thank you.