



October 17, 2018

The Rt Hon Penny Mordaunt, MP  
Secretary of State for International Development  
and Minister for Women and Equalities  
22 Whitehall  
London, SW1A 2EG

Open letter sent via email: [penny.mordaunt.mp@parliament.uk](mailto:penny.mordaunt.mp@parliament.uk)

Dear Minister Mordaunt:

With this open letter, I am registering my profound objections to the non-inclusive design and haphazard, last-minute organization of your “International Safeguarding Summit” scheduled by the United Kingdom’s Department for International Development (DFID) on Thursday, October 18, 2018 in London. A rudimentary [agenda](#) was disclosed one week prior to Thursday’s meeting; the [names](#) of those selected to speak about “Tackling Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment in the Aid Sector” were withheld from registered attendees until late Tuesday, fewer than 48 hours before the opening session. The agenda and the list of speakers confirmed for me that the stated purpose of this eight-hour “summit” (which includes two hours for breaks) has no basis in reality. As the representative of the Code Blue Campaign, as a registered participant who was denied any speaking role, and as one of countless civil society experts who are genuinely devoted to solving a complex, debilitating crisis created by and sustained at the top levels of the aid sector, I find the purported objectives of this meeting cavalier and offensive.

DFID’s much-vaunted “summit” relegates 500 mostly self-financed invited delegates to roles as passive audience members who will listen, yet again, as powerful institutions’ appointed spokespersons mount the stage to repeat the “commitments” that have already been recited, over and over, from similar international platforms during similar expensive, time-consuming meetings. To suggest that the well-publicized objectives of this meeting—*“to support survivors and victims, enhance accountability, incentivise cultural change, drive up standards, and strengthen organisations’ capacity and capability”*—can even skim the surface, much less break new ground to solve these grave issues, is not only insulting to meeting participants, but deeply offensive to victims, past and future. Survivors of sexual abuse worldwide are now struggling to make their voices heard. Their pain and suffering should never be exploited by powerful institutions for public relations or damage control purposes.

The late afternoon features concurrent thematic sessions during which attendees will be divided into three groups of 150-plus to hear from more panelists and, one assumes, to “discuss” the aid sector’s accountability, employment practices, and responses to victims, all within a 90-minute span. Three men have been chosen to moderate the voices raised during those discussions, with approximately 10 minutes each to ‘feed back’ to the full plenary.

According to your interview with Sean O'Neill, which was published today in *The Times*, you plan to use this meeting to announce that the UK will "pioneer a worldwide register of suspected sexual predators working in the aid sector." No time has been allocated during the summit's plenaries for delegates to discuss this radical move.

Incredibly, in the 15 minutes between the end of those discussions and the start of the day's last session, the organizers will somehow produce and launch the summit's "outcome documents." I strongly suspect that the outcome of this international meeting was pre-determined and prepared in advance by DFID and select members of its organizing committee. If the participants were neither to be informed nor consulted about the meeting's outcome, I fail to see your purpose in convening us.

Having been barred from presenting the Code Blue Campaign's critical analysis of the issues at hand and our [constructive proposals for reform](#), I have canceled my flight to London and will not participate. If this is what is meant by your meeting's slogan, "Putting People First", this so-called summit is not worth the climb.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Paula Donovan". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Paula Donovan  
Co-Director, AIDS-Free World