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Statement on Development Partner Coordination on Social Protection

All Protocol observed

Good morning to all and thank you so much for the excellent presentations and discussion so far on this hugely important area for us all.

This morning we heard of the importance of the long term vision for social protection and the need for a strong system to prepare for shocks and ALSO the value of emergency unconditional cash transfers.

We also heard about the stark impact of COVID-19 on many people in Uganda.

2020 has shown that now more than ever we need to come together to effectively support systems that deliver good social protection for vulnerable people and are shock responsive.

My role today is to convey a number of key messages on behalf of partners working to support Social Protection in Uganda, a wide group who support a myriad of interventions.

As a group we have collectively agreed on the importance of:

- a. **Collaboration** between all actors and government in the implementation of the various components of the National Social Protection Policy and Programme Plan of Interventions;
- b. **Harmonizing and aligning** development partners' social protection interventions with each other and in line with GoU policy and planning, wherever possible, including among other things, in the area of financial support to government Social Protection mechanisms;
- c. **Providing coordinated technical advice** and support to Government and its partners based on sharing information and good practices on social protection;

- d. And, as evidenced by today, support **coordinated high level dialogue and advocacy between development partners and government on expanding social protection.**

Our key messages are 3-fold:

One, we believe that pooling DP and GOU capacity and resources into a coordinated and consolidated effort to respond to the effects of the COVID -19 pandemic is the most effective way forward. The longer-term impact of Covid 19, we suggest, can only be managed by working at scale and working together, mobilising resources on the ground and turning them into concrete action packages for the most vulnerable. **Clearly, adequate financial resources are critical**

Secondly, there are a range of social protection policies, tools and lessons learnt from earlier pandemics, economic and financial crises which we can draw from. And we believe in the basic principle of viewing social protection as a human right, and the desirability of working towards a universal social protection system that protects people to weather the shocks along their life cycle and increases their resilience.

Thirdly the Covid-19 pandemic has exposed the need to re-think how existing government systems can address large-scale shocks that have such a potentially hazardous impact on vulnerable people. This need has emerged in the past, during recurrent and rapid shocks, such as droughts and floods and this unprecedented global pandemic has reminded of starkly of the great need for preparedness and responsiveness.

WE as Development Partners welcome the recent efforts to advance the country's capacity to respond to shocks and we appreciate important efforts made in this sector. More specifically, we recognize

- the interest of the Ministry of Gender, Labour and Social Development (MoGLSD) to prioritise investments to develop a shock-responsive social protection system as recommended by the social protection sub-sector review. MoGLSD is already coordinating the Urban Cash for Work programme, as part of the government's COVID-19 recovery strategy.

- The Office of the Prime Minister's request for support to modernize and improve Early warning systems, with the ambition to move to early action, as shown by the request submitted to the EU in 2019, which consequently led to the establishment of the **Strengthening Shock-Responsive Systems in Karamoja project**.
- Finally, the critical role that the Ministry of Finance, Planning and Economic Development plays in ensuring that social protection response systems are under-pinned by adequate, national, risk financing mechanisms.

We see it as particularly important, and urge the government of Uganda to consider the integration of mechanisms and tools from social protection and the other related humanitarian sectors to strengthen the capacity to anticipate and respond to multiple shocks through multiple mechanisms.

I can't emphasize the importance of coordination enough. All Actors and agencies involved in social protection, need to come together and coordinate effectively.

Uganda has had the misfortune of having been hit by many shocks before – floods, drought, locusts. When shocks like these and COVID-19 hit, **coordination needs to focus on the response**, to ensure effective and timely interventions that can protect more people from falling into poverty, preserve development gains and save money from costly belated responses.

Consensus should also be built on how to transition from emergency to sustained longer term input - based on a common understanding of when the crisis is over.

Several building blocks of the system are already present but they are not necessarily designed to work in a coordinated manner thus leading to fragmentation. Rather than designing new social protection or shock-responsive programmes we should collectively invest in strengthening what is there.

Lastly we believe that a well-developed national social protection policy won't be sufficient if the integrated approach is not understood at the very local level, where action will reach those in need. We therefore need to work at enhancing capacity at local level to expand programmes.

To sum up, development partners stand with the Government and people of Uganda in these efforts to build a strong, inclusive and fair society for all.

Thank you