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**Statement
of the Special Commissioner of the German Bishops'
Conference on all questions relating to sexual abuse of minors
and on issues of child and youth protection in the Church's
sphere of influence,**

Bishop Dr Stephan Ackermann (Trier)

**Press conference on the presentation
of the Study "Sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests, deacons and
male members of orders in the domain of the
German Bishops' Conference" (MHG Study)
on 25 September 2018 in Fulda**

For eight years I have been the Special Commissioner of the German Bishops' Conference on all questions relating to sexual abuse of minors in the Church's sphere of influence. Since then, this topic has been part of my everyday life. Since then it has shaped my ministry and my life as a bishop. And yet to this day I cannot consider this topic to be normal for me. On the contrary, the more testimonies I have read or the more I have heard from those affected over the years, the more my disgust and anger against this type of crime have grown. Men who were given special trust because of their consecration and their mission and who therefore also had a special responsibility, manipulated and abused children and young people for their own needs. This has left its mark on the lives of the victims, who are often severely affected by the consequences of violence.

Unfortunately, I had expected the result of this study. Nevertheless, it frightens me again. We asked the researchers to identify special risk factors in the Catholic Church that could favour the structures and dynamics of abuse. Now we have the answer. The research report gives us clear indications.

In recent years we have taken a whole series of measures against sexual violence in the sphere of the Church. This applies in particular to the field of

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prevention thanks to the committed prevention commissioners and their many fellow campaigners. The research report shows us, however, that we bishops have to proceed even more consistently and in a more coordinated way with each other and that all measures for intervention and prevention are ineffective if they are not embedded in a church culture and in structures that help to effectively prevent the abuse of power. We have received this mandate from Jesus Christ Himself. Jesus already strongly condemns the abuse of power when he says to his disciples: "You know how those who exercise authority among the Gentiles lord it over them; their great ones make their importance felt. It cannot be like that with you. Anyone among you who aspires to greatness must serve the rest". (*Mt 20:25f*)

As the Commissioner of the Bishops' Conference, I will work to ensure that, with the help of the results of the MHG study, we will persistently continue along the path of combating abuse. We bishops will not be able to do this alone. This also is shown by the experience of the past years. For this we need the critical and supportive help of others: of the faithful, of society, of politics, of science and especially of those affected.