



STATEMENT DELIVERED BY DR DEWI MARIA SUHARJANTO

Project manager

The project that concludes today was intended to create a framework in which victims' experiences have an impact.

Mr Schmitz,

Thank you for sharing with us the little screwed-up ball of paper that bore the writing of a ten-year-old child! You have enabled us to conclude this project in the manner in which we started it: with testimony. With the documentation of a crime. Every large working meeting of our project members included readings and reports – reports that describe the reality. In addition, sub-project I (examination of dossiers) gave us insight into the behaviour patterns that made the reality invisible. In a few minutes Josef Bill, the long-serving presiding judge at the Higher Regional Court, will present sub-project I to us. The reports from sub-project I formed an important part of the project's memory. At long last, in almost all sub-projects, representatives of the victims' perspective were working together either temporarily or permanently, and their reflections enhanced our awareness of the fact that victims' testimonies have to be the key starting and end points for our deliberations and for our actions in the future.

Mindful of the risk of losing our focus and trying instead to reform the Church, all the project's results and ideas for implementation were formulated based on facts from the study of sexual abuse of minors by Catholic priests (known as the MHG). How is a measure related to the MHG? How does it help the victims? Risks remain, despite this categorisation. One of the victims, looking back at the project, said: "The victims are a heterogeneous group." Whenever any abstraction, any thesis was formulated, this glossed over and lost sight of the individual case and caused injury. Whenever any information was not passed on, or was passed on too slowly, it left the impression of poor integration and opacity. This inadequacy remained painful for all the 70 experts involved, right up to the end, and for some of the victims it led to anger and suffering. I wish to thank the victims very sincerely for – in spite of this – giving the project their valuable perspective, which was ultimately indispensable for us. Without you, we would not be where we are today!

Ms Schillai and Bischof Bätzing, who commissioned the project,

In April 2019 you asked me to lead this project and to find suitable experts in order to protect children and other vulnerable people specifically from abuse. Since that time, you have given us and the 70 project experts access to the diocese's personnel files, you have provided us with a budget and, most importantly, you promised to accept all the findings of our search for factors that lead to abuse. For example, Ms Schillai, you said at the meeting of the "20", an important meeting of sub-project group 9 - sustainability with the eight sub-project managers - and you: "I have always understood this to mean that the results generated here have been and will continue to be accepted by us in the form in which you present them to us. We have no right to sort them, we have no right to decide which of them are more

important. We who commissioned the project will receive the result – and it is immaterial whether we like it or not.” And you, Bishop Bätzing, added: “I take the same view. The result is what it is. And the result will be made public. That’s also what I want. But who will help me with the concrete questions? I really think it’s important that a practice should be changed so that our project’s main theme becomes reality. And if there’s anything that helps in that process, I want it.” Our grateful thanks go to you for having the courage to commission the project.

Ms Burgsmüller, project observer,

Professor Sabine Andresen, who chaired the Independent Commission to recognise and resolve child sexual abuse and whom I hold in high regard, drew my attention to the independent spirit that a project aimed at recognising and dealing with past events will always wish for: a lawyer with the greatest expertise, trained in communication, and highly educated far beyond the area of criminal law. Ms Burgsmüller, at all of our meetings I have benefited from your many years of experience in processes of recognition and resolution and their dynamics and rules. Reviewing what has gone wrong demands a serious approach, a readiness to be disillusioned and the ability both to express criticism and to deal with it. You were aware of these project costs; I was not always.

Project experts, the “70”,

Almost a year ago, you declared your willingness to accept a mandate from the Catholic Church here to work on the recommendations of an investigation into sexual abuse of minors by priests of the Catholic Church in nine sub-projects: examination of the priests’ dossiers in the Diocese of Limburg/revising the training programme for priests/developing personnel leadership/appropriate communication and information on abuse/clericalism/equal rights/sexual morals/various types of leadership. This project, whose managers I am representing today, is your project. It bears your hand. Herta Müller once wrote, “Precise observation means dividing things up.” The final report that is being officially handed over today and which marks the end of our mandate bears an impressive testament to how you have precisely observed a complex deficiency and divided it up into separate thematic areas. This led to the definition of 61 measures. It also resulted in a powerful work of recognition and resolution – powerful, because you yourselves were strong. And committed – all the way to bearing shame. Thank you very much for your part in this project, for your honest struggles in our shared meetings and for our learning together.

Now I’ll ask Mr Bill to show us how this interdisciplinary learning can be experienced.