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Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi releases 'Handbook on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013

**Practical and user-friendly procedures outlined in the Handbook will be helpful for actual implementation of the Act:
WCD Minister**

The Minister of Women and Child Development, Smt Maneka Sanjay Gandhi released the 'Handbook on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act, 2013 in New Delhi today. The Handbook was released in the presence of Secretary, WCD, Shri V Somasundaran; Additional Secretary, WCD, Ms Nutan Guha Biswas and other senior officials of the Ministry.

Smt. Maneka Sanjay Gandhi said that the Government is committed to promote gender equality at all workplaces throughout India, as gender equality and the empowerment of women are key to social and economic development of the country. It is the responsibility of every employer to ensure safety of women in a work environment and improve their participation and I am pleased to release this Handbook on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal), Act 2013, she said. The Minister explained that the Handbook provides key information about the provisions of the Act in an easy-to-use and practical manner. The Handbook has been developed with the aim to ensure that the citizens of India are aware of their rights and obligations of creating a safe workplace environment for women. Smt. Maneka Gandhi hoped that the practical and user-friendly procedures outlined in the Handbook will be useful for actual implementation of the Act.

The Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013 was enacted in order to provide a safe and secure working environment to women at workplace. With the enactment of the Act, India is now a part of the group of countries to have prohibited sexual harassment at workplace through national legislation. The Act is unique in its broad coverage which include all working women from organised and unorganised sectors alike, as also public and private sectors, regardless of hierarchy.

In order to uphold and enforce the rules as laid in the Act, the Ministry of Women and Child Development has developed a Handbook on Sexual Harassment of Women at Workplace (Prevention, Prohibition and Redressal) Act 2013. The Handbook is meant for all workplaces, institutions, organisations to provide basic understanding of sexual harassment at places of work. It is also designed to offer Internal Complaints Committee/s and Local Complaints Committee/s established under the Act with simple, user friendly information on sexual harassment; what is expected of the Complaints Committee to redress a complaint and what the inquiry process and outcome should be.

The Handbook is structured into six sections. The first section is an introduction and detail regarding the genesis of the Act, the second sets the context by defining the workplace and sexual harassment and impact of such behaviour, the third focuses on the key individuals and institutions involved in prohibition and prevention processes and their responsibilities, section four discusses the Redressal mechanism, followed by monitoring requirement in section five and important international frameworks and best practices on sexual harassment at the workplace in the concluding section.

This Handbook will be of tremendous value for employers, employees and complaint committees alike, as it provides guidance with regard to the steps to be taken and the processes to be followed, in line with the requirements of the law. It will prove useful to all women workers particularly and be a step forward in promoting their right to work with dignity as equal partners in an environment that is free from harassment.

NB