STATEMENT on COURT FINDINGS and THE COMPLETION OF A FORENSIC ACCOUNTING INVESTIGATION regarding STICHTING MAYDAY RESCUE FOUNDATION

On 11 November 2019, Stichting Mayday Rescue Foundation was shocked and saddened by the tragic death of its Founder, Director, and CEO, James Le Mesurier. In the months since James’s death, Mayday management has faced the daunting challenge of charting a way forward in cooperation with its donors and partners amidst the shock of a terrible personal and leadership loss.

Recently, a court decision was released by the Amsterdam court regarding the termination of a Director of the Stichting Mayday Rescue Foundation. Mayday disagrees with certain elements of the court decision and is considering an appeal. While this decision is being considered, it should be pointed out that, in the text of the court decision, there are certain statements regarding the handling of donor funds by Mayday Rescue which are variously unintentionally misleading due to lack of context or outright inaccurate.

With regards to any suggestion of misallocation of funds: among the activities conducted in the months since James’s death was a forensic accounting investigation of Mayday’s financial records performed by the accounting firm Grant Thornton. The investigation report was completed at the end of May; its key finding was that, while there were gaps in Mayday’s financial administration and controls, there is no evidence of fraud or misappropriation of funds by James Le Mesurier, his widow or staff. The report, however, did find evidence that the Director subject to termination made unjustified payments to himself, which per the court order have to be repaid.

Regarding questions as to the handling of public funds and the amount of donor money going to direct programme cost vs. operating costs, it should be understood that all implementers delivering aid funding spend a certain percentage on overhead and operating cost; Mayday was within industry standards in this regard, especially when compared to for-profit implementers delivering similar high-risk programming in conflict areas. All budgets were agreed with donors; financial reporting for all grants has been submitted. Mayday has always taken the responsibility of handling public money seriously, and has endeavored to provide full transparency on the expenditure of grant funds to its donors.

James’s colleagues, friends and family are still grieving and we ask that press be mindful and respectful of their privacy in what continues to be a difficult time for all who knew him.

Cor Vrieswijk
CEO, Stichting Mayday Rescue Foundation