

ACTION FOR PEACEKEEPING



FACT SHEET: SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE – PEACEKEEPING INITIATIVES IN ACTION

Updated: 18 December 2019

IMPROVEMENTS IN VETTING PERSONNEL

- The Secretariat, in collaboration with Member States, is proactive in **vetting all personnel** who are to serve in a peacekeeping or special political mission to ensure that they do not have a prior history of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, while serving in a UN peace operation.
- Since 2015, troop and police contributing countries are also **required to certify** that individuals being deployed have not been committed, or been alleged to have committed, violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law, or have been repatriated on disciplinary grounds from a UN operation.
- They are obliged to provide **full list of troops** to the Conduct and Discipline Service which then checks it against its misconduct database for proper screening. The results of this screening process are communicated to Member States on a case-by-case basis.

IMPROVEMENTS IN TRAINING PERSONNEL

- The Secretariat provides T/PCCs with **training materials on conduct and discipline** for their pre-deployment training, including regarding the expected standards of conduct on conduct and discipline and the absolute prohibition of SEA.
- Member States are also required to certify that they have delivered **pre-deployment training** on the prohibition of SEA to all uniformed personnel as part of the deployment requirements.
- **Induction training, in-mission training and training of trainers** are also used to continuously train all personnel.
- A dedicated [SEA e-learning programme](#) has also been developed. It uses cases studies and scenarios to train personnel on all aspects of the zero tolerance policy. This online/offline training is mandatory for all personnel serving in peace operations including in special political missions, whether they serve at Headquarters, missions or duty stations and has been adapted for use across the UN system and implementing partners. The programme was also made available in French last year and other UN languages will follow.
- A “**no excuse card**” available in six languages (and other contingents’ languages, depending on their deployment) continues to be distributed and carried by all personnel deployed in the field to ensure all personnel will abide to the code of conduct of the United Nations and know how to report allegations.

PROGRESS IN INVESTIGATIONS

- Beginning in 2015, the SG adopted a **six-month timeline for the investigation of cases** by the UN, subject to extenuating circumstances. He has called upon Member States to agree to the same timeline. Investigations are continuing even when the alleged perpetrator has been repatriated or rotated out of the country.
- Where an **expedited timeframe** may be required, the deadline for concluding investigations into SEA by UN investigative entities will be **3 months** and the Secretary-General has asked Member States to agree to the same standard. The average duration of investigation (days) has decreased as follows:
- In order to launch investigations more quickly, **Immediate Response Teams (IRT)** have been established in most peacekeeping missions, made up of mission-based experts in a variety of fields. IRTs ensure that evidence of possible sexual exploitation and abuse will be gathered and preserved once it is reported.
- A system-wide **incident reporting form (IRF)** is being field-tested in the DRC.

PROGRESS IN FOLLOW-UP WITH MEMBER STATES AND ACCOUNTABILITY

- In the spirit of greater transparency and accountability, since 2015 we have begun to **name troop and police contributing countries whose personnel have allegations of SEA**.
- The UN has been **suspending payments for members of military contingents and formed police units** since 2015 against whom a substantiated allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse has been recorded. Since 2016, these **payments are available for the Trust Fund** in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse.
- The provisions of [UN Security Council resolution 2272](#) focuses primarily on military personnel and members of formed police units serving in peacekeeping missions, and the responsibility of troop- and police-contributing countries to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and hold their personnel accountable. Through resolution 2272, the Security Council requested the Secretary-General to repatriate a particular military unit or Formed Police Unit when there is credible evidence of widespread or systemic sexual exploitation and abuse by that unit. Operational Guidance, which is designed to provide a framework for implementing the resolution, was finalized in July 2016 and shared with members of the Security Council. A Standing Review Committee co-chaired by the Departments of Management, Strategic Policy and Compliance and the Department of Peace Operations meets periodically to review matters.
- We have created a [repository of national legislation of Member States](#) deployed to peace operations (56 countries so far have contributed) on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse to further enhance awareness and transparency.
- The Secretary-General has also **requested Member States to assess their existing national legislation** to determine applicability to sex crimes committed by nationals while in service with the UN and, if necessary, to assess whether new legislative action is required.

- In order to further promote criminal accountability, the Secretary-General has also **requested Member States to agree to establish on-site court martial proceedings** when allegations amount to sex crimes under national legislation in cases involving members of military contingents. Such courts martial may allow better access to victims, witnesses and evidence, and ensure greater transparency. So far, Egypt, Bangladesh and South Africa have conducted such on-site court martial proceedings.
- Over the past years, the United Nations has made concerted efforts to engage concerned Member States in systematically addressing matters of [paternity and child support](#). In 2014, the Department of Field Support shared a **DNA collection protocol** with concerned Member States and offered to assist those Member States in obtaining DNA samples from mothers and children for the purpose of testing their DNA against DNA samples from alleged fathers. Furthermore, the Secretary-General in his previous reports on Special Measures called upon Member States to appoint **national paternity focal points** to receive and advise on paternity claims. The paternity focal points are an important part of the process, as they can bridge the gap between the facilitation that can be offered by the United Nations, including DNA collection, and steps required under national laws to advance paternity claims. Several Member States have indeed appointed such focal points, and the United Nations has facilitated contacts between the focal points and the complainants.

PROGRESS IN OUTREACH TO COMMUNITIES

- All peacekeeping missions have [community-based complaint reception mechanisms](#) or referral pathways in place to ensure that members of the local community are able to report complaints, follow-up on status of reports, and receive assistance and support as required. The objective of this approach is two-fold:
 - provide a safe and secure reporting mechanism to population at risk
 - sensitize communities on the risk associated with sexual relationship with mission personnel deployed to those locations.
- All peacekeeping missions, as part of their [communications strategy on sexual exploitation and abuse](#), conduct outreach activities to inform communities on the risks of SEA and the reporting mechanisms using various forms ranging from direct outreach, theatre, radio and TV programming, SMS-based and social media campaigns as well as specific outreach to local media.

PROGRESS ON VICTIM ASSISTANCE

- The **Uniform Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse** (the 'Protocol') provides direction to relevant organizations of the United Nations system on the provision of assistance and support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN staff and related personnel or by non-UN forces operating under UN Security Council mandate. Endorsed in December 2019, the Protocol aims to strengthen a coordinated system-wide approach to provide assistance and support in a consistent and effective manner in response to all allegations of SEA.
- The **Victim Assistance Tracking System (VATS) database** is being rolled out following training of Conduct and Discipline Teams and Focal Points in June 2019. This confidential platform serves as a central repository of critical information on complainants and victims of SEA, referrals and services provided, the tracking of follow up communications with victims and service providers, and the handling of paternity claims

- At the core of the victim assistance strategy is the [Trust Fund in Support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse](#) established in 2016 by the Secretary-General. Its purpose is to fund victims' assistance and support services through service providers to victims and children born of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel. Over **US\$ 2.5 million** have been available in the Trust Fund, which include voluntary contributions from **21 countries** as well as from **payments withheld from personnel** against whom sexual exploitation and abuse allegations have been substantiated, which amount to approximately **US\$ 600,000**. Twelve projects have been supported by the Trust Fund: 9 in DRC (3 implemented, 6 at the starting stage on livelihood support, psychosocial support and reintegration of victims into their communities); 2 in CAR (1 ongoing on medical, psychosocial support and awareness-raising within communities; and 1 at the starting stage on legal services); 1 in Liberia (ongoing on educational vocational support). A first meeting with Member States on the Trust Fund took place in June 2019 and we hope to make this a regular event.
- Ms. Jane Connors of Australia was appointed late 2017 as the first [Victim's Rights Advocate](#) at the level of Assistant Secretary-General. She is working across the UN system to make sure victims have access to urgent assistance; that they can file complaints safely and reliably while fully respecting their rights, dignity and privacy; and that they get timely information on the progress of their case. On the ground, she is supported by Victims' Rights Advocates in four missions (MINUJUSTH, MINUSCA, MONUSCO, and UNMISS).
- To support Missions in identifying risks and mitigating measures, a [Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Management Toolkit](#) offers practical tools to identify, assess, treat and monitor. The toolkit has been expanded to include all forms of misconduct is being disseminated to all Secretariat entities, including peace operations and has been shared with Member States.
- The Secretary-general established in September 2017 a [Circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations](#) made up of **87 sitting and former Heads of State and Governments** to set an example of how leaders hold their personnel accountable for sexual exploitation and abuse violations and on reporting back to the UN on steps taken in this regard.
- **103 Member States*** have signed a [Voluntary Compact](#) with the United Nations, a document that emphasizes the shared principles for support to United Nations peace operations and includes specific commitments to combat and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in mission areas. The signatories include over 90 troop- and police-contributing countries representing some 70% of all uniformed personnel.
- As a means of strengthening transparency and accountability, the Conduct and Discipline Services launched in 2017 a [website](#) on the conduct and discipline function which includes a live database of allegations, an online reporting form and a subscription service for database updates. It is available in English and French [<https://conduct.unmissions.org>].

ANNEX I: Member States signatories to the voluntary compact with the Secretary-General of the United Nations on the commitment to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse

103 signatories: 1. Albania 2. Algeria 3. Andorra 4. Argentina 5. Australia 6. Austria 7. Bangladesh 8. Belarus 9. Belgium 10. Benin 11. Bhutan 12. Bosnia and Herzegovina 13. Brazil 14. Bulgaria 15. Cabo Verde 16. Cambodia 17. Canada 18. Central African Republic 19. Chile 20. Costa Rica 21. Cote d'Ivoire 22. Croatia 23. Cyprus 24. Czech Republic 25. Democratic Republic of the Congo 26. Denmark 27. Djibouti 28. Dominican Republic 29. Ecuador 30. Egypt 31. El Salvador 32. Estonia 33. Fiji ** 34. Finland 35. France 36. Gabon 37. the Gambia 38. Germany 39. Greece 40. Guatemala 41. Honduras 42. Iceland 43. India 44. Indonesia 45. Ireland 46. Israel 47. Italy 48. Japan 49. Kazakhstan 50. Latvia 51. Liechtenstein 52. Lithuania 53. Luxembourg 54. Malawi 55. Malaysia 56. Mali 57. Malta 58. Mexico 59. Monaco 60. Montenegro 61. Morocco 62. Namibia 63. Nepal 64. Netherlands 65. New Zealand 66. Niger 67. North Macedonia 68. Norway 69. Pakistan 70. Panama 71. Paraguay 72. Peru 73. Philippines 74. Poland 75. Portugal 76. Qatar 77. Republic of Korea 78. Republic of Moldova 79. Romania 80. Rwanda 81. Saint Vincent and the Grenadines 82. Samoa 83. San Marino 84. Senegal 85. Slovakia 86. Slovenia 87. South Africa 88. Spain 89. Sri Lanka 90. Sweden 91. Switzerland 92. Tanzania 93. Thailand 94. Togo 95. Tunisia 96. Turkey 97. Uganda 98. Ukraine 99. United Kingdom 100. United States of America 101. Uruguay 102. Viet Nam 103. Zambia

ANNEX II: List of Member States that have contributed towards the Trust Fund in Support of Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse:

21 contributors: Bhutan, Cyprus, Ecuador, India, Japan, Norway, Albania, Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Finland, Germany, Italy, Luxembourg, Nigeria, Pakistan, Portugal, Slovakia, Sri Lanka, Switzerland, Uganda.