



**71st Session of the General Assembly  
Fifth Committee**

**Statement on behalf of the Member States of the European Union**

**By**

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**149. Administrative and budgetary aspects of financing UN PKOs:**

**Cross-cutting issues - SEA**

**New York**

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As delivered

Mr. Vice Chair,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Member States of the European Union.

The Candidate Countries Turkey, the former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia<sup>1</sup>, Montenegro\*, Serbia\* and Albania\*, the country of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidate Bosnia and Herzegovina, as well as Ukraine, the Republic of Moldova and Georgia, align themselves with this statement.

Mr. Vice Chair,

1. I would like to thank Ms. Jane Holl Lute, Special Coordinator on Improving United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, for introducing the Secretary General's report on "Special Measures for protection from SEA: a new approach". I would also like to thank Mr. Carlos Ruiz Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions, for introducing the report of the Advisory Committee.
2. The EU MS promote collective action to maintain and implement the highest standards of conduct and to prevent and combat sexual exploitation and abuse. We strongly support the Secretary-General's leadership in dealing with this difficult challenge, which calls for a system-wide response based on the pillars of prevention, enforcement, victim support and accountability.
3. We welcome the efforts of the Secretary-General to work closely with Member States on structural, legal and operational measures to make zero tolerance a reality and advocates a victim-centred strategy rooted in transparency, accountability and in ensuring justice. The early establishment of the Task Force on UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse was a clear sign of the Secretary-General's determination to implement an ambitious new approach to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse committed by those serving under the UN flag. We welcome the efforts of the Special Coordinator and we express support to her Office, and all others across the Secretariat working on this issue.
4. The EU Member States attach great importance to peacekeeping – a core task of the Organisation and its flagship activity in extremely challenging environments around the world. The protection of civilians is at the centre of peacekeeping, and any act perpetrated against those most vulnerable is intolerable.
5. EU Member States have consistently expressed their principled position on the policy of zero-tolerance and therefore the approach of zero-impunity for all civilian, military and police personnel in UN and other international peace operations, as advocated by the Secretary-General.
6. The latest report of the Secretary-General highlights many important issues that we look forward to discussing with Colleagues and the Secretariat. We note, for instance, with

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<sup>1</sup>\*The former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, Montenegro, Serbia and Albania continue to be part of the Stabilisation and Association Process.

appreciation the proposed victims' rights advocate functions; the on-going work on the process of ensuring better reporting of SEA in all parts of the UN system; the implementation of the whistle-blower policy; the stronger engagement with civil society and external partners; the application of the Human Rights Due Diligence Policy, and strengthening of the investigation capacities across the UN-system. There are other aspects that we would like to learn more about, such as the proposed voluntary compact between the Secretary-General and Member States. We are also willing to work with the SG and the SC in order to strengthen the process for the timely sharing of all relevant information with the Members States contributing to PKOs as well as operations under UNSC mandate, in order to ensure accountability and facilitate the completion of the national judicial proceedings.

Mr. Vice Chair,

7. The EU MS are committed to work on the long term with partners, all TCCs and stakeholders in a spirit of genuine cooperation on combating and preventing SEA, ensuring that allegations are duly investigated, justice is served by the countries who contributed the personnel, and in providing victims with the assistance they require.
8. The adoption of UNSC Resolution 2272 (2016) was an important step guiding further actions for a system wide approach on SEA. General Assembly resolution 70/286 on peacekeeping cross-cutting issues addresses this issue in a comprehensive and transparent way and provides for the necessary tools to effectively enforce a zero tolerance policy and represents another major step forward in the fight against sexual exploitation and abuse. Women and girls are more often the targets of sexual exploitation and abuse due to the embedded gender inequality in societies, yet another important aspect of our common efforts.
9. The adoption of a GA resolution on UN action on SEA on 10 March presents an opportunity to reinforce the system-wide nature of our efforts. While we are not opposed in principle to discuss SEA in the plenary, we wish to underline that this will not preclude the mandates of governing structures like C-34, 5C, 6C and UNSC. We will continue our work to strengthen the UN response to SEA in all competent committees.
10. There must be no backsliding on what we have agreed, we owe it to the victims and our own contingents to set high standards and stick to them. We must stand by the objective to enhance the credibility and the effectiveness of the United Nations to deliver.

Thank you, Mr. Vice Chair.