



BANGLADESH

Statement by the Bangladesh Delegation on Agenda Item 75: *Criminal Accountability of UN Officials and Experts on Mission* under the Sixth Committee at the 71st Session of the UN General Assembly, Friday, 07 October 2016

Mr. Chairman,

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of NAM on this agenda item.

We take note of the Secretary General's informative report and furnish the following observations and information in our national capacity.

The UN officials and experts deployed in Missions bear the solemn responsibility to uphold the Charter principles and thus the image, credibility and integrity of the organization itself. Any allegation of wrongdoing leveled against these individuals should be duly investigated with the outcomes shared in a transparent manner in order to set precedents for the rest of the world in promoting accountability and breaking a culture of impunity. It is critical that allegations are proven beyond reasonable doubts prior to subjecting the concerned official or expert to appropriate sanctions. On this score, the Member States have the responsibility to extend due cooperation to the UN with respect to their nationals against whom such allegations are made.

Bangladesh contributes to UN peacekeeping missions to internationally uphold certain values and principles we cherish as a nation. In line with our firm 'zero tolerance' approach to sexual exploitation and abuse by our peacekeepers, we recognise the need for addressing the scourge in a decisive and sustained manner. In case of proof of any such allegation against our national, we ensure the primacy of appropriate disciplinary and criminal justice measures in line with the corresponding national legal provisions. We make it a point to share information on investigations and sanctions imposed on the

accused and convicted individuals with the Secretariat. We consider remedial action in support of victims in case of proven allegations as a non-derogable responsibility.

Among concrete measures, we halt all UN pay and allowances in case of any allegation arising against any of our personnel and repatriate him or her with immediate effect. Command channel are also made accountable for any allegation against any members of the contingent, and are instructed to pay regular visit to all their camp locations. Our Contingent Commanders are empowered to punish the offender in the mission area. We deploy National Investigation Officers as and when required.

We further recognize that the objective of addressing sexual exploitation and abuse can be effectively be served through well-designed and rigorous pre-deployment training, systematic screening and oversight, and effective investigation and prosecution systems. All these would require inclusive and transparent dialogue among all concerned, clear standards setting, and sustained investment in capacity building where there are such needs.

In his report A/70/729, the Secretary General has rightly identified certain underlying factors for the occurrence of sexual exploitation and abuse beyond some random allegations. While such factors in no way create a pretext for such allegations, it is important that the lessons learnt from various contexts be captured in an objective fashion and appropriate response strategies be devised through consultations with all concerned at the field level. At the Headquarters, it is critical that sexual exploitation and abuse issues are made part of triangular consultations involving the Security Council, the troop and police contributing countries and the Secretariat.

In the backdrop of the momentum created for addressing the challenge, we note the discussions taking place in various fora in line with their respective mandates. This may, however, preclude the possibility of working out a well-calibrated and cohesive narrative through the interface of these various bodies. We, therefore, see evident merit in the suggestion a number of troop and police contributing countries, including my own delegation, had made recently to have regular, all-encompassing discussions on the subject under the purview of the General Assembly. Such Assembly meetings should

also be the forum for sharing relevant Secretariat documents and guidelines with a view to enhancing transparency and ownership across the board.

As has been articulated a number of times, it would be counter-productive to take an approach of collective punishment for the misconduct and crimes of certain individuals. The media and other partners also need to be sensitized to the importance of upholding the image and credibility of peacekeeping missions while demanding accountability.

The trust, confidence and respect that our peacekeepers have earned over the decades must not be allowed to be compromised by the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as other aberrations. The communities hosting our peacekeepers must not feel susceptible to the people they consider to be the custodians of peace.

We consider it critical to maintain a similar 'zero tolerance' approach any form of allegations involving corruption, fraud, theft or smuggling by UN officials and experts.

I thank you.