



## BANGLADESH

### **Statement under Agenda Item 78: *Criminal Accountability of UN Officials and Experts on Mission* at the Sixth Committee of the 72<sup>nd</sup> Session of the UN General Assembly**

**Statement by:** Mr. Tareq Md. Ariful Islam, Deputy Permanent Representative  
**Date and venue:** Friday, 06 October 2017 at Trusteeship Council Chamber

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**Mr. Chairman,**

The issue of criminal accountability of UN officials and experts is largely dominated by the repeated allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in mission settings. The ‘zero tolerance’ approach vigorously pursued by the UN needs to be translated into a ‘zero case’ scenario with deserving priority.

Bangladesh thanks the Secretary General for this determined action to ensure criminal accountability for allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against UN officials and experts on mission. In this context, we also recognise the work done by the Under Secretary General, Department of Field Support and the Special Coordinator on improving UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

We have taken due note of the Secretary General’s comprehensive report and recommendations contained in document A/71/818, and welcome the progress made in pursuance of many of the recommendations. Bangladesh appreciates the honest acknowledgement of the prevailing realities and the emphasis given on combating sexual exploitation and abuse across the system.

In this connection, we further stress the need for remaining seized with the broader scope of criminal accountability, and the importance of constant vigilance and responsiveness particularly by field managers against allegations involving corruption, fraud, theft or smuggling by UN officials and experts.

All 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, either civilians or uniformed personnel, should be duly investigated with the outcomes shared in a transparent manner in order to send a strong message against impunity. This

remains critical for enhancing and sustaining trust in the UN by Member States and other relevant stakeholders. It also applies for non-UN forces deployed in Mission with UN endorsement, as they are also expected to uphold the UN values and principles in their conduct.

The Secretary General's proposal to delegate enhanced responsibilities to field managers would be largely tested by the latter's commitment and alacrity to ensuring criminal responsibility for those employed or deployed under their supervision. The contracts envisaged to be concluded between the Secretary General and the concerned field managers must give primacy to accountability - including criminal accountability - for any alleged wrongdoing and aberration.

In case of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, centrality must be accorded to the rights and protection of victims. We commend the Secretary General for appointing a Victim Rights Advocate, and for his suggestion for enhancing the scope of support services provided for victims. There is a need for setting up effective complaint receiving and redress mechanisms at the field level in order for victims to come forward and report allegations. It would be particularly crucial for mission leadership to develop a sound working relation with concerned civil society actors in order to sensitize and protect the rights of victims. The special victim support fund created by the Secretary General has the potential to carry out further useful work. Bangladesh has pledged contribution to the tune of USD 100,000 and urges other Member States to contribute.

In response to the Secretary General's invitation, our Hon'ble Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina readily gave her consent to join the 'Circle of Leadership' on combating sexual exploitation and abuse, and reaffirmed her personal conviction in her speech at the High-level Meeting on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse on 18 September 2017.

As our Prime Minister indicated, Bangladesh contributes to UN peacekeeping missions to internationally uphold certain values and principles we cherish as a nation. In case of any allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse against any of our nationals deployed in the UN, we ensure 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 at his own expense with immediate effect. Our Contingent Commanders are empowered to punish the alleged offender in the mission area. We ensure prompt measures in designating National Investigation Officers, and stand ready to positively respond to the UN's suggestion on conducting joint investigations in case of specific allegations against our nationals.

We further recognize that the objective of addressing sexual exploitation and abuse can effectively be served through well-designed and rigorous pre-deployment training as well as systematic screening and oversight. Bangladesh has signed on to the Voluntary Compact proposed by the Secretary General, and would remain committed to undertaking appropriate legal, policy and administrative measures to comply with the provisions stipulated in the Compact. The experience with the Voluntary Compact could be a useful guide for addressing the outstanding issue of the draft Convention on Criminal Accountability of UN officials and experts on mission.

Bangladesh underlines the need for sustained efforts to work towards implementing the Security Council Resolution 2272 (2015). Our delegation supported the tabling and adoption of the General Assembly Resolution 71/798 in order to complement and further clarify certain aspects of the Security Council Resolution. We believe comprehensive discussions within the General Assembly and Security Council can help the UN as a whole to resolutely forge ahead on the pathway to a 'zero case' scenario.

In his report A/71/818, the Secretary General had identified certain underlying factors and identifiable trends for the occurrence of sexual exploitation and abuse in mission settings. While such factors in no way create a pretext for such allegations, it is important that the lessons learnt from various contexts be seriously taken into consideration and appropriate response strategies be devised through consultation with all concerned at the field level. There needs to be sustained investment in strategic communication to apprise the media and other partners about actions taken in response to allegations and also to sensitize them about the limits of the UN's authority in dealing with investigation and prosecution.

Mr. Chairman, 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.

I thank you.