

Statement by Mr. Seung-Ho SHIN, Counselor

Permanent Mission of the Republic of Korea

Sixth Committee of the General Assembly

Item 78: Criminal Accountability of the United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission

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Mr. Chairman,

At the outset, my delegation would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his three reports(A/72/121, 126, 205) on “Criminal Accountability of the United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission” which provide material basis moving our discussion forward.

While my delegation recognizes the valuable contribution of UN personnel to the fulfillment of the purposes of the Charter, we believe that any criminal activity by persons abusing their status as UN officials or experts on mission cannot be tolerated. Those activities not only tarnish the reputation and credibility of the UN but also seriously affect the functioning of the missions as they are likely to discourage the local population from cooperating with the UN. As such, crimes by UN personnel should not go unpunished and Member States should take all appropriate measures, including establishing the relevant jurisdiction, to ensure that perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice.

Among the various types of crimes, sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel is particularly deplorable in that it victimizes the very vulnerable group that UN personnel are meant to serve and protect. In this regard, we reaffirm our full support for the zero tolerance policy of the United Nations on sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel. Such serious violations, if not properly punished, would create the negative perception that United Nations officials and experts on mission operate with impunity.

Mr. Chairman,

With respect to Annex I of the Secretary-General's third report on the information received from States regarding all referrals since 2007, my delegation notes with appreciation that the Office of Legal Affairs referred 35 cases to States of nationality for investigation and possible prosecution for the last reporting period. We also commend the Secretary-General for undertaking the active follow-up with the States concerned as well as improving the method and scope of the report.

However, we cannot but express our concern about another statistic, which is quite disappointing. Out of the total of 124 cases passed on to Member States, information provided from the States was about only one fifth of the cases. As we all agree, our efforts to end impunity for crimes by UN personnel cannot move forward without active commitment by Member States, and we find it crucial for the States of nationality to periodically inform the Secretariat of ongoing progress as well as the final results of the cases within their jurisdiction. In this context, we commend those States which have cooperated with the UN in the exchange of information and have provided feedback to the Secretary-General on the follow-up of cases.

Mr. Chairman,

While the punishment of criminals is important in terms of justice and also serves as a prevention mechanism to a considerable degree, the significance of efforts to prevent possible crimes by UN personnel from the very beginning cannot be overemphasized. In this context, my delegation would like to express our appreciation to the Secretary-General for the practical measures described in the last part of his report in order to strengthen existing pre-deployment training and vetting measures.

My delegation considers that the Secretary-General and all Member States share a common responsibility to make concerted efforts to prevent such offenses and punish the perpetrators. In this sense, we would like to highlight the value of discipline and importance of training prior to deployment, especially as performed by each Member State.

As a contributing country to peacekeeping missions, the Republic of Korea provides a two-month intensive training course for those who are to be deployed in the missions. They are chosen through an extremely rigorous process among many able soldiers and are given instruction in the necessary professional ethics standards. We believe such pre-deployment training must have contributed to the fact that no crimes of a serious nature have been committed by Korean nationals while serving as UN personnel.

I would like to conclude my remarks by sharing a proverb which states that "Once the first step is taken, we are already on the half the journey." There is no denying that the path towards ending the impunity of perpetrators of serious crimes is rugged and winding. However, my delegation firmly believes that there is no insurmountable challenge in the face of determined will and strong commitment. We further believe that it is time to renew our collective resolve to ensure criminal accountability and ultimately prevent all crimes by the United Nations Officials and Experts on mission.

Thank you.