

Remarks at the 74th General Assembly Sixth Committee
Agenda Item Number 76: Criminal Accountability of United Nations Officials
and Experts on Mission
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Thank you, Chair.

The United Nations plays a critical role in the world, discharging its solemn mandate to maintain international peace and security, promote and respect human rights and fundamental freedoms, and promote international cooperation in solving economic, social, cultural, and humanitarian problems. We recognize and thank the multitude of officials and experts on mission who perform these duties admirably, upholding the high standards of integrity expected of those working on behalf of the United Nations. We must remain vigilant in protecting the credibility of the United Nations in carrying out this work, and clear-eyed about the effect incidents of criminal behavior by UN officials and experts on mission has on the public's confidence in the United Nations. The United States reiterates its firmly held belief that UN officials and experts on mission should be held accountable for the crimes they commit.

Each of us has a role in promoting accountability for alleged criminal activity and, in that regard, we appreciate opportunities for cooperation. In particular, we welcome the United Nations' cooperation with U.S. authorities on various criminal investigations, even those that do not involve allegations against a UN official, but about which the UN may have relevant information. The UN Office of Legal Affairs (OLA) continues to implement the General Assembly's request for more follow up with Member States to which referrals of criminal allegations have been made when no response has been received, and we appreciate their readiness to assist, when requested, on all referrals.

The responsibility to take action on referrals lies with us, the Member States, and the Secretary-General's report clearly reflects that some of us are not living up to that responsibility. Member States need to do better. In this regard, we note that earlier this year, the State Department provided proposed legislation to our Congress that, if enacted, will close jurisdictional gaps in our domestic laws so that U.S. authorities can take appropriate steps to follow up on *all* referrals of criminal allegations involving U.S. citizens serving with the United Nations abroad. One case of impunity is one case too many. We reiterate our call on other Member States to take similar steps.

The United States thanks OLA for its two reports, and appreciates in particular the progress made on training and vetting at the UN. For example, the Secretary-General reported on the standardization of conduct and discipline induction training across the entire Secretariat. Appropriate and timely training is fundamental to instilling the expectation of high standards, and we encourage that such training be standardized across UN funds and programmes, as well. We also welcome the implementation of enhanced vetting measures, particularly the expansion of the ClearCheck database to screen for prior substantiated SEA allegations and sexual harassment, including for those personnel who have resigned from the UN when the allegations are pending.

The Secretary-General continues to demonstrate leadership on addressing sexual exploitation and abuse at the UN, and the United States has been one of the leading proponents of reforms. Nonetheless, the information provided in the annexes to the Secretary-General's report A/74/145 makes clear that the issue before the Sixth Committee goes beyond sexual exploitation and abuse that may amount to criminal conduct. Allegations of corruption, fraud, and theft constitute a large portion of the referrals made by the United Nations to Member States this reporting period, as well as in previous years. The Sixth Committee, rather than engaging in a parallel debate with the Fifth Committee on SEA in the peacekeeping context, should provide greater focus on civilian officials and experts on mission across the UN and failures to hold them criminally accountable.

We look forward to further engagement in this Committee and with the Secretariat on this critical issue.

Thank you.