



Statement by H.E. Muhammad Abdul Muhith, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of Bangladesh to the United Nations in New York on the agenda item no: 74 “Criminal Accountability of the UN Officials and Experts on Missions” at the 77th Session of the United Nations General Assembly, Sixth Committee, Trusteeship Council, 06 October 2022

Madam Chair,

Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered on behalf of Non-Aligned Movement. We thank the Secretary-General for his reports A/77/237 & A/77/225.

Madam Chair,

The UN officials and experts deployed in UN Missions bear the solemn responsibility to uphold the Charter principles, and thus, the image, credibility, and integrity of the organization. Any allegation of wrongdoing against these individuals should be duly investigated in a transparent manner. It is also critical that allegations are proven beyond reasonable doubt prior to subjecting the concerned official or expert to appropriate sanctions.

On this score, the Member States have the responsibility to extend full cooperation to the UN with respect to their nationals against whom such allegations are made. In this regard we also underscore the need to strengthen national accountability mechanisms including adequate internal disciplinary measures by the respective organizations.

Madam Chair,

Currently, Bangladesh is the top troops and police contributing country with 7,144 peacekeepers deployed in 09 peacekeeping missions. As the top TPCC, Bangladesh takes the issue of criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on missions very seriously.

Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina maintains a policy of 'zero tolerance' on the question of any misconduct by our peacekeepers and has been one of the first members of the Secretary General's Circle of Leadership against sexual exploitation and abuse. We are also one of the earliest endorsers of the Secretary General's voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse.

At the national level, we have put in place various policy measures to address the various forms of criminal activities that may be committed by peacekeepers. Bangladesh Defence Force and Police Force who serve as United Nations officials or experts on mission, are subject to a system of military or Police discipline, thereby ensuring accountability at all times.

During pre-deployment training at Bangladesh Institute of Peace Support Operation Training, our peacekeepers are made aware of possible repercussions for lapses or acts of sexual exploitation and abuse and other crimes. We have developed customized training module taking into account the unique cultural settings of different field missions.

However, we express our deep regret that the UN personnel, especially the peacekeepers continue to remain targets in the field and the measures to ensure accountability for the crimes against them remain grossly inadequate. This week Bangladesh has lost 3 of its brave soldiers in Central African Republic while on duty. We strongly condemn this cowardly attack and call for swift investigations by the UN as well as by the host country and bring the perpetrators to justice.

My delegation profoundly thanks the delegation of Malaysia and others for their expression of heartfelt condolences over the tragic killing of Bangladeshi peacekeepers.

Madam Chair,

To reinforce our common pledge to uphold highest standards of professionalism and integrity, we need to do more. Allow me to share a few points:

First, prevention is always better than cure. The UN system as well as the member states with personnel deployed or employed in the UN and in the field

missions need to invest more in preventive measures. In this regard, developing customized training modules for in-mission and pre-deployment trainings, including refresher trainings, is important. Equally important is to ensure access to those training materials, especially including in the native languages.

Second, it is important to harmonize the standards of investigation of such crimes allegedly committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission. In this regard, regular exchange of information and sharing best practices among the stakeholders is important. We note with appreciation various measures taken by the UN to that end, including by providing a platform for discussion. But more can be done.

Third, It is also important that extreme caution should be taken to ensure confidentiality of the communications regarding allegations of misconduct in order to avoid unfair stigmatization of the persons concerned, especially when the allegations are yet to be proven beyond reasonable doubt.

Finally, while addressing this issue of criminal accountability, we must give utmost importance to the centrality of the rights and protection of victims. As a manifestation of our victim-centric approach, Bangladesh made a voluntary contribution of an amount of 100,000 US dollars to the Trust Fund established by the Secretary General. We would like to see enhanced measures to support the victims in coordination with the State of the victim's nationality.

To conclude, Madam Chair, we reiterate Bangladesh's unwavering commitment to the implementation of relevant resolutions on the criminal accountability of the UN officials and experts on Missions as well as other national officials on Mission.

I thank you, Madam Chair.