

Seventy-seventh Session  
[4 or 6] October 2022  
Sixth Committee  
(Provisional) agenda item 75  
Criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on mission  
Statement by Norway on behalf of the Nordic countries  
Delivered by First Secretary Ms. Mirjam Bierling

Mr. Chair,

I have the honour of speaking on behalf of the five Nordic countries: Denmark, Finland, Iceland, Sweden – and my own country, Norway.

The issue of criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on mission continues to be of critical importance.

Criminal actions carried out by UN officials and experts are unacceptable. The UN and its Member States must push forward with a zero-tolerance policy towards such crimes, through preventive measures, legislation, and action. It is essential that these crimes are investigated and prosecuted, both for the sake of the victims of the crimes and for the credibility and integrity of the UN and its Member States.

The Nordic countries welcome the Secretary General's report on the policies and procedures of UN entities regarding credible allegations revealing that United Nations officials or experts on mission may have committed a crime. We also reiterate our support of the Secretary General's recommendation that Member States continue encouraging the distinct legislative bodies of the United Nations system and related organizations to help ensure the coherence and coordination of relevant policies and procedures.

Furthermore, we welcome the Secretary General's report submitted under the present agenda item, which provides valuable information on Member States' reporting on, and national follow-up of, cases of criminal offences committed by UN officials or experts on mission.

Unfortunately, like the last couple of years, this year's report bears witness of an unacceptable development. The overview of all reported cases since 2007 currently shows 331 allegations of serious criminal offences committed by UN officials or experts on mission referred to the Member

States. 45 of these cases, were reported during the period from 1 July 2021 to 30 June 2022.

The Nordic countries are particularly concerned by the allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. Between 1 July 2017 and 30 June 2022, 24 credible allegations of such crimes committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission were referred to their States of nationality. These numbers demonstrate the importance of the continued focus on this matter. They also demonstrate the significance of the measures initiated by the UN over the past years to root out sexual exploitation and abuse in UN structures and operations. The Nordic countries fully support the Secretary-General's strategy to improve the organisation's system-wide approach to preventing and responding to such exploitation and abuse.

Two recorded cases of sexual exploitation and abuse occurred over the last reporting year, and we cannot rule out a significant number of unrecorded cases. This is a slight decrease, compared to the year prior, which we hope comes as a result of the continued efforts taken by the Secretary General along with Member States. Two cases are still two too many, but we believe that, with continuous joint efforts, we can bring the visions behind the zero-tolerance policy into reality.

The Nordic countries are also concerned by the continued high number of crimes for profit, such as fraud, corruption, and theft. We condemn the reprehensible nature of these crimes, which exploit and damage operations and programmes initiated to aid people in dire need of help. To scam and steal from these programmes is to scam and steal from some of the most vulnerable people in the world.

Mr. Chair,

Too many Member States fail to respond adequately to cases referred to them. This lack of response is unacceptable. As the list of referred cases lengthens, without Member States providing the necessary information on their follow-up at the national level, the pressure against the UN and its Member States to address this serious problem increases. The Nordic countries therefore strongly encourage States that have not yet provided the required information regarding these cases to do so.

The Member States have the primary responsibility for addressing the serious issue of accountability of UN officials and experts on mission. All Member States must take the necessary legislative steps to establish

jurisdiction over crimes committed by their nationals while serving as UN officials or experts on mission.

All Member States must uphold the principles of due process and the rule of law. Moreover, it is equally important that all Member States ensure the effective protection of victims, witnesses, and whistle-blowers.

The Nordic countries urge all Member States that have not yet done so to submit, at their earliest convenience, relevant information to the Secretary-General regarding the status of their domestic legislation on this matter, in accordance with paragraphs 28 and 29 of resolution 76/106.

Mr. Chair,

The Nordic countries look forward to a constructive debate on a comprehensive international legal framework to address criminal conduct of UN officials and experts on mission. This could be an important step towards fighting impunity. We would once again like to thank the Group of Legal Experts for the Draft Convention.

In closing, the Nordic countries would like to reiterate the importance of ensuring accountability for crimes committed while in service for the UN. As for Member States' willingness and ability to hold their own nationals accountable for crimes committed while in UN service, nothing less than full transparency is acceptable. We remain ready to consider all measures that can be taken to ensure accountability and strengthen the follow-up of these cases.

I thank you.