

**Statement by Mr. Yahya Aref, Third Secretary of the Permanent Mission of the Islamic Republic of Iran to the United Nations
On behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement
Before the Sixth Committee**

78th Session of the United Nations General Assembly

on Agenda Item 76:

“Criminal Accountability of United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission”

New York, 10 October 2023

Mr. Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement.

The Non-Aligned Movement takes note of the Reports of the Secretary-General contained in documents A/78/275 and A/78/248 on the implementation of General Assembly Resolution 77/98, which contains information on the policies and procedures of the United Nations Secretariat, funds, programmes and other entities regarding any credible allegations that reveal a crime which may have been committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission as well as recommendations to help ensure that such policies and procedures are coherent, systematic and coordinated throughout the United Nations system.

Particularly, we take note of the recommendation that the United Nations system entities should continue to utilize their internal networks to measure the adequacy of their existing policies and procedures to identify potential disparities as well as to promote enhanced cooperation on cross-cutting issues, such as financial recovery.

We also request the Secretary-General to continue to improve reporting methods by providing a full scope of the obstacles in the United Nations as well as any practical problems faced in the implementation of the General Assembly resolutions on Criminal Accountability of United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission with the aim of developing appropriate policies and legal solutions in this Committee.

As we have expressed on previous occasions, the Non-Aligned Movement attaches great importance to the issue of Criminal Accountability of United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission. As we speak, NAM Countries not only contribute more than 80% of the peace-keeping personnel in the field but are also major recipients of these peace-keeping missions.

In this regard, the Non-Aligned Movement expresses its appreciation for the outstanding contributions and sacrifices of UN peacekeepers. The Movement stresses, however, that all UN peacekeeping personnel should continue to perform their duties in a manner that preserves the image, credibility, impartiality and integrity of the United Nations. The NAM emphasizes the importance of maintaining a zero-tolerance policy when addressing all cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeeping personnel.

The Non-Aligned Movement takes note of the work undertaken by the Ad Hoc Committee in the framework of a Working Group on the criminal accountability of the United Nations officials and experts on mission over the course of its three sessions held in 2007, 2008 and 2012. The topic of the Criminal Accountability of United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission was placed on the agenda of the Sixth Committee over a decade ago, and the UN has taken important as well as timely steps since. However, there is still a long way until an ideal situation is actualized.

The NAM underlines the need to enhance international cooperation to ensure the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission. We urge the United Nations to continue cooperating with States exercising jurisdiction in order to provide them with information and material for purposes of criminal proceedings initiated by States within the framework of the relevant rules of international law and agreements governing the activities of the United Nations.

In this sense, we take note of the comprehensive strategy on assistance and support for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations staff and related personnel, which was adopted by General Assembly Resolution 62/214. This strategy will help mitigate the suffering of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse as well as offer social support, legal services and medical attention, among other things.

It is also important that the victims of criminal conduct perpetrated by United Nations officials and experts on mission are made aware of available victim support programs.

We also believe that the full implementation by all Member States of General Assembly Resolution 77/98 as well as previous General Assembly resolutions adopted pertaining to the Criminal Accountability of United Nations Officials and Experts on Mission could contribute to bridging any jurisdictional gaps, if they exist, and will strengthen accountability mechanisms as well as contribute to guaranteeing due process with respect to investigating acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. Moreover, the development of harmonized United Nations standards of investigation of crimes allegedly committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission can be critical to strengthening the United Nations system of accountability overall.

We encourage Member States to exercise their jurisdiction in applicable cases in order to ensure that criminal acts do not go unpunished. It is crucial that the state of nationality acts in a timely manner to investigate and prosecute the alleged crimes. We also call upon all states to provide information to the United Nations on any such referrals. Subsequently, an assessment can be undertaken to explore if there is any need for further measures to be carried out by the General Assembly.

The Non-Aligned Movement reiterates its concern with respect to all alleged crimes perpetrated by United Nations officials and experts on mission, including allegations of fraud, corruption and other financial crimes. In that regard, the Movement welcomes the reaffirmation by the Secretary-General that there will be no tolerance for any corruption at the United Nations and urges the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that his zero-tolerance policy for criminal activities, such as sexual exploitation, abuse and corruption, is made known to all United Nations officials and experts on mission at all levels, especially those in managerial positions.

We strongly urge that States take all appropriate measures to ensure that any and all alleged crimes by United Nations officials and experts on mission do not go unpunished and that the perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice.

The NAM reiterates that it is still premature to discuss a draft convention on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission. We believe that the work of the Committee must focus on substantive matters for the time being and leave matters of form for a subsequent stage.

I thank you, Mr. Chairman.