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Sixth Committee

“Criminal Accountability of UN officials and experts on mission”

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Madam/Mr. Chair,

The Kingdom of the Netherlands aligns itself with the statement given by the European Union on behalf of the EU and its Member States. In addition, the Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to share the following.

Let me start by thanking the Secretary-General for his reports on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission and for his commitment to tackling impunity. In particular, the Secretary-General's continued efforts to bring credible allegations of criminal conduct by UN officials or experts on mission to the attention of the respective States of nationality of those individuals.

I would also like to highlight and appreciate the work done by United Nations officials and experts on mission. In particular, the significant, impactful and brave service of UN peacekeepers. Working in difficult and dangerous environments, UN peacekeepers are united by a common commitment to protect those in vulnerable situations and conditions to maintain or restore peace.

When on mission, representing the United Nations, it is therefore of utmost importance that the credibility, impartiality, and integrity of the United Nations is held high. This cannot be realized without a zero-tolerance policy for misconduct and crimes committed by officials and experts on mission.

Madam/Mr. Chair,

I would like to draw renewed attention to the Secretary-General's zero-tolerance policy for sexual exploitation and abuse.

In addition, I would like to highlight the importance of women's participation in peacekeeping missions, as well as the need to ensure that missions are diverse, as this contributes to the more effective prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

First, the prevention of, and zero-tolerance for, sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment is important considering UN peacekeepers are on mission to protect the most vulnerable. Sadly, allegations of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment implicating UN officials and experts on mission have continued to emerge. Therefore, addressing sexual exploitation, abuse, and harassment by focusing on both prevention and response, requires our continued attention.

Second, UN peacekeepers serve the cause of peace and security, making sacrifices to contribute to a common goal, which is not without risk. As a result, it is particularly unacceptable for a UN peacekeeper to become a victim of misconduct or a crime committed by fellow peacekeepers. While having more female peacekeepers is an important factor contributing to the prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation, female peacekeepers remain at higher risk of discrimination, sexual harassment and abuse themselves. This underlines that, addressing the root causes of discrimination against women, sexual harassment and abuse in UN peacekeeping missions, by focusing on both prevention and response, requires our continued attention.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands would like to especially emphasize the importance of prevention through measures such as the screening and training of UN officials and experts, and pre-deployment vetting of UN peacekeepers. It is also of the utmost importance to create a culture in which individuals are encouraged to report alleged misconduct and crimes, and to establish appropriate safeguards against retaliation.

When allegations of criminal conduct do come to light, an effective investigation and prosecution by the State of nationality should be carried out. Criminal accountability is important for the victims, for UN peacekeepers themselves, and for the overall credibility, impartiality, and integrity of the United Nations. It goes without saying that this applies to all UN officials and experts on mission.

The Kingdom of the Netherlands itself has a zero-tolerance policy for inaction in case of credible allegations of alleged misconduct or crimes. We expect that everything is done to prevent and adequately address sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. The Kingdom of the Netherlands further fully supports the UN's zero-tolerance policy for misconduct for crimes committed by UN officials and experts on mission.

Thank you, Madam/Mr. Chair