



Statement on behalf of the Republic of South Africa

By

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United Nations General Assembly**

under Agenda Item 76:

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

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Chair

Thank you for affording us the opportunity to speak on this matter which has been on the progressive tracks of development for nearly two decades in which strides have been taken to address this issue effectively. South Africa aligns itself with the statements delivered by Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement and Uganda on behalf of the African Group.

Chair

South Africa reiterates, as we have previously done in our statements on this issue, the significance of criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission as such persons are, in almost all circumstances, deployed to locations where the most vulnerable groups of persons are and persons who are therefore least protected.

South Africa gives recognition to the contribution of UN officials and experts on mission who at the risk of personal prejudice, continue reporting such criminal activity and misconduct. Their courage for standing for what is right is commendable. Additionally, South Africa commends the bravery and courage of UN officials and experts who discharge their responsibilities, duties and functions with integrity and professionalism that is necessary in preserving the credibility, impartiality and integrity of the United Nations especially in terms of a zero-tolerance approach for cases of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by peacekeeping personnel and other personnel in different fields.

South Africa continues to remain fully supportive of a rule-based regime created by a multilateral Convention as a long-term solution that aims to regulate this issue in order to ensure accountability and deter future crimes of this nature being committed by UN Officials and experts. This will not only ensure accountability, prevention of escape from accountability, punishment for such crimes committed against vulnerable groups that seek our assistance and aid, but it will also ensure the prevention and deterrence of such crimes being committed in the future which will result in the protection of possible future victims together with the protection of courageous “whistle blowers”.

South Africa further reinforces its support of the short-term solutions by continuing to encourage the development and implementation of domestic legislation that will allow domestic courts to be entrusted with jurisdiction over UN officials and experts on mission which will play a pivotal role in closing the 'jurisdictional gap' in the prosecution and punishment of perpetrators of such serious crimes under domestic law pending the development, progress and finalisation of the creation of an appropriate treaty. In this regard, South Africa also calls on all Member States to endeavour to close the 'jurisdictional gap' by taking proactive efforts in the development of their domestic legislation that will enable their domestic courts to exercise jurisdiction over UN officials and experts who have immunity for criminal acts committed by them in foreign jurisdictions.

In conclusion Mr Chair, South Africa welcomes, applauds and gives its appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports on this matter, and acknowledges the extensive work that has been put in for the production of the reports and values the information contained therein. In light of this, South Africa encourages and urges the Secretary-General to continue the great work he has been doing on this matter and continue to make progressive strides in ensuring the protection of human rights of vulnerable groups.

We thank you.