



United Kingdom Mission
to the United Nations

One Dag Hammarskjold Plaza
(885 Second Avenue)
New York, NY 10017

Email: uk@un.int
http://twitter.com/UKUN_NewYork

UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,
UNGA78, AGENDA ITEM 76

CRIMINAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF UNITED NATIONS OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS ON
MISSION

10 October 2023

Delivered by Jonathan Hollis

Check against delivery

Thank you Chair and let me thank the Secretary-General for the two reports on criminal accountability, which continue to be of significant value to our work.

Tackling impunity and promoting accountability remain priorities for the United Kingdom and that includes within the UN system.

We want to see a United Nations that demonstrates zero tolerance to inaction on sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment. This means the following six goals need to be achieved:

- enforcing UN standards of conduct;
- ensuring people feel protected;
- strengthening ways in which concerns can be raised;
- investigating cases in a way that prioritises the rights, dignity and the needs of victim-survivors;
- protection for whistle-blowers; and
- ensuring perpetrators are held accountable, including through criminal processes where appropriate.

Today I would like to highlight a few actions that support these goals.

First, support for victim-survivors. It is vital that those individuals who do come forward to report crimes and wrongdoing are properly supported. The UK runs courses on Sexual and Gender-Based Violence investigations that it developed for police deploying into UN and African Union peacekeeping missions. These courses focus on Trauma-Informed and Victim-Centred investigations. They seek to provide the specialist knowledge and skills needed for dealing with complex and traumatic investigations. This training enables police officers to support the most

vulnerable victims with the aim of bringing more perpetrators to justice. The UK urges the UN to ensure peacekeepers from every nation are given the full breadth of training on sexual exploitation and abuse before deployment.

In the same vein, we welcome the work of the Victims' Rights Advocate and the Senior Victims' Rights Officers to support victims on the ground, including the recent publication of a clear statement of the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN staff or related personnel.

Second, on accountability. Ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable is vital. Crimes committed by UN officials and experts on mission should not go unpunished and the UK is committed to, and encourages other States to, ensure timely reporting on allegations.

The priority finding of the group of legal experts on accountability in 2006 was that the UN should prioritise the facilitation of the exercise of jurisdiction by the host State. And, where the host State is unable, for other States to act, including through extraterritorial jurisdiction.

The UK therefore encourages all relevant States to exercise their jurisdiction where possible to ensure crimes are investigated and, where appropriate, that perpetrators are prosecuted for offences.

Third, on ensuring an effective system.

We welcome the various policies, commitments and standards have been developed and adopted since 2003 to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse across the humanitarian, development and peacekeeping sectors. But much more can be done to build a robust and coherent system.

That is why over the past year the UK has been working with the UN and many others to develop a proposed global “Common Approach to Protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (CAPSEAH).” This would better align all work to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse across humanitarian, development and peacekeeping settings and improve accountability. The Common Approach will be launched for public consultation next month and we encourage all members to engage.

We all share the responsibility to ensure accountability across UN system, let us work together to tackle this important issue.

Thank you Chair.