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# UNITED KINGDOM OF GREAT BRITAIN AND NORTHERN IRELAND

UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY, SIXTH COMMITTEE,  
UNGA 79, AGENDA ITEM 76

CRIMINAL ACCOUNTABILITY OF UN OFFICIALS AND EXPERTS ON MISSION

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Delivered by Lieve Caron

*Check against delivery*

Thank you Chair, and let me thank the Secretary-General for the two reports on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, 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 United Nations system.

In particular, we want to see a United Nations that demonstrates zero tolerance to inaction on sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment. It is critical that the United Nations strengthens efforts to embed a system-wide approach to prevention of and response to sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and strong coordination across all entities in every location. This is increasingly urgent given the risk of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment linked to growing instability and conflict. We must ensure that policies are mainstreamed in organisational culture and practices, with leadership committed to ensuring appropriate resources and capability are in place to prevent sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment from happening, and to support victim-survivors and hold perpetrators to account when it occurs.

We welcome the fact that the Secretary-General's Special Coordinator on improving the UN response to sexual exploitation and abuse has

commissioned a comprehensive assessment to determine how to best integrate the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse into all UN activities and programmes. The assessment will also develop options for predictable and adequate resourcing at headquarters and in the field. We also look forward to the findings of the UN Joint Inspection Unit's Review of policies and practices to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations system organizations.

Supporting victims-survivors is paramount. Those who report crimes and abuses must be met with the care and protection they deserve. The United Kingdom delivers essential training to police officers in UN and African Union peacekeeping missions, focusing on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. This training ensures peacekeepers are skilled in critical areas, such as reporting mechanisms, the far-reaching impacts of Sexual and Gender Based violence on victims and communities, and the UN's zero tolerance policy on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. The United Kingdom strongly urges the UN to guarantee that all peacekeepers, from every nation, receive comprehensive training on Sexual and Gender Based Violence and Sexual Exploitation and Abuse before deployment, to safeguard the vulnerable and maintain the integrity of peacekeeping missions.

In the same vein, we welcome the work of the UN Victims' Rights Advocate and the Senior Victims' Rights Officers to support victims on the ground. This work includes the clear statement of the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN staff or related personnel, as well as ongoing advocacy with States to seek resolution of outstanding paternity and child support claims for children born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse perpetrated by uniformed personnel deployed to United Nations peacekeeping operations.

Ensuring that perpetrators are held accountable is also vital. Crimes committed by UN officials and experts on mission should not go unpunished and the United Kingdom is committed to, and encourages other States to, ensure timely reporting of allegations. We encourage all relevant States to exercise their jurisdiction where possible to ensure crimes are investigated and, where appropriate, that perpetrators are prosecuted.

The United Kingdom is supporting Interpol's Project Soteria to strengthen the capacity of law enforcement to investigate reports of Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment in the aid sector and to maintain and manage criminal records. The Project also aims to prevent and detect

cases of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment by facilitating information exchange and enhancing recruitment mechanisms, to prevent perpetrators from working and moving within the aid and peacekeeping sectors.

Finally, more can be done to increase multi-stakeholder action and accountability for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment across the international system. That is why over the past year the United Kingdom has been working with the UN and many other state and non-state actors to develop a Common Approach to Protection from Sexual Exploitation, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Harassment (CAPSEAH) to improve collective action, partnerships, collaboration, including at a national level. We encourage Member States, the UN and all relevant organisations to endorse this common approach and to use it to consider how they might better protect against sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment and improve accountability.

Thank you, Chair.