



# General Assembly

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**Sexual exploitation and abuse: implementing a  
zero-tolerance policy**

**Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of  
the United Nations peacekeeping operations**

## **Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse**

### **Report of the Secretary-General**

#### *Summary*

The present report was prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [71/278](#), [71/297](#), [72/312](#) and [73/302](#). It contains updated information on measures to strengthen the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse.



## I. Introduction

1. In 2017, I put forward a strategy to combat sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel in my first report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse ([A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#)). My strategy prioritizes the rights and dignity of victims, ending impunity, increasing partnerships with Member States, building a network of support with civil society and improving strategic communications for education and transparency. The present report provides updates on progress in the implementation of that strategy, focusing on how I have prioritized accountability measures in areas under my control and realized a victim-centred approach throughout the United Nations system through institutional and policy measures and concrete action on the ground.

2. Sexual exploitation and abuse are not inevitable. The majority of the more than 190,000 uniformed and civilian personnel across more than 30 United Nations entities serve with professionalism and dedication, often in difficult or dangerous environments. When these wrongs occur, however, they harm those whom we seek to assist and protect, tarnish the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations and, by breaching trust, undermine our mission and programmatic goals across the humanitarian, peace and development sectors.

3. I promised to put the United Nations “house in order” and have done so by introducing systems in areas within my authority directed at holding our leadership and personnel throughout the Organization personally accountable for creating an environment in which the prohibitions on sexual exploitation and abuse are known and understood. This has resulted in sustained engagement at the most senior levels, in the field and at Headquarters, and heightened awareness among personnel of their obligation to adhere to required standards of behaviour. There is also increased understanding of the consequences of a breach of these standards, which include dismissal and a bar to reemployment in any part of the United Nations system. The United Nations cannot institute judicial processes to hold individuals civilly or criminally accountable, but I have deepened cooperation with Member States so that those who perpetrate these wrongs are held to account.

4. While I am gratified that much has been achieved in terms of alignment and coherence in approaches to prevention and response throughout the United Nations system, as well as in raising awareness and changing attitudes, I acknowledge the significant challenges that remain. The high turnover of personnel, combined with the vulnerable environments in which the United Nations operates, require constant vigilance to ensure that systems are in place to identify and mitigate risk, screen and train our personnel and respond in a victim-centred, timely and robust way to allegations when they are received. Ultimately, we, as an international community, must address the root causes of sexual exploitation and abuse, including gender inequality and the deep power imbalance between our personnel and those whom we are mandated to protect and aid, if we are to combat these shameful and harmful behaviours effectively.

## II. Progress in the system-wide response to sexual exploitation and abuse

5. The High-level Steering Group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse<sup>1</sup> is the forum for principal-level engagement and coordination in the implementation of my strategy. It is chaired by the Chef de Cabinet and meets twice annually.

6. My Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse chairs a system-wide working group on sexual exploitation and abuse,<sup>2</sup> which meets twice a month and is comprised of representatives of the High-level Steering Group and other entities, to strengthen harmonized approaches to prevention and response. Under the umbrella of this working group, initiatives are developed and implemented inclusively and voluntarily by all organizations of the United Nations system, including the members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB).<sup>3</sup> To sustain coordination and high-level attention on the issue, I extended the mandate of the Special Coordinator until 31 December 2020.

7. In line with General Assembly resolution 71/297 and my request (A/73/744, para. 7), in 2019, the Office of the Special Coordinator mapped the human and financial resources dedicated to the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system on the basis of information provided by the entities that participate in the system-wide working group on sexual exploitation and abuse. Sixteen staff members are dedicated to this work in the Secretariat.<sup>4</sup> Agencies, funds and programmes reported that the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse are mainstreamed across all programming through a broad range of functional roles and responsibilities. All personnel are expected to incorporate awareness and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse into their duties, while programmatic investments, although not exclusively devoted to addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, mainstream prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in line with existing guidelines.

<sup>1</sup> The members of the High-level Steering Group are the heads of the Department of Global Communications, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, the Department of Operational Support, the Department of Peace Operations, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs on behalf of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, the Development Coordination Office, the Office of Legal Affairs, the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) and the World Food Programme. The Office of Internal Oversight Services participates as an observer.

<sup>2</sup> Representatives of members of the High-level Steering Group, the Department of Safety and Security, the Peacebuilding Support Office, the Office of Human Resources, the Office of Military Affairs, the Office of Information and Communication Technology, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, the United Nations Office for Project Services, the International Organization for Migration and United Nations Volunteers.

<sup>3</sup> See [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/fact-sheet-secretary-general's-initiatives-prevent-and-respond-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/fact-sheet-secretary-general's-initiatives-prevent-and-respond-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse).

<sup>4</sup> Four staff members in the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (Under-Secretary-General, one P-5, one P-4 and one General Service), four staff members in the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate (Assistant Secretary-General, one P-4, one P-3 and one General Service), four Field Victims' Rights Advocates (P-5), one staff member in the Department of Peace Operations (P-4), one staff member in OHCHR (P-4) and two staff members in the Conduct and Discipline Service of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance (one P-5 and one P-4).

### III. Coherence of the development and humanitarian sectors

8. I have underscored the fact that the risk of acts of sexual exploitation and abuse is not limited to peacekeeping, but also affects humanitarian operations and development settings. I have been pleased by the activities and cooperation of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee,<sup>3</sup> the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance, to address sexual exploitation and abuse. The Committee collaborates closely with the Special Coordinator and the Victims' Rights Advocate, who participate during its meetings of principals to ensure coherence of approach and a strong victim-centred focus on the implementation of its strategy on protection from and responses to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.<sup>5</sup> The Committee established a dedicated results group to support humanitarian leaders and practitioners through collective approaches to accountability and inclusion in overall response efforts, including in relation to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.

9. Under the leadership of the Executive Director of the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Champion on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment until September 2019, the Committee developed a plan for accelerating the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in the humanitarian response at the country level. Three priorities are identified in the plan as essential for every humanitarian or refugee response: (a) safe and accessible reporting mechanisms; (b) quality assistance for victims; and (c) the capacity to offer prompt, confidential and respectful investigations with corresponding indicators to track and benchmark progress. With the support of a broad range of United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the plan has been implemented in 32 countries, including through the deployment of dedicated inter-agency protection from sexual exploitation and abuse coordinators in more than 30 humanitarian emergencies.<sup>6</sup> The current Champion, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), prioritizes prevention; the expansion of safe spaces to remove barriers to reporting; the promotion of the respectful use of authority through the implementation of initiatives that support my strategy, including funding the development of an inter-agency training package for partners and convening a session on values, culture and attitudes with Committee principals; and the creation of a community outreach and communications fund for the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. The Executive Director of the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) will assume the role of Champion in September 2020.

10. To bolster accountability through more effective and timely investigative practices and strengthen investigative capacities throughout the humanitarian sector, in 2019, the Inter-Agency Standing Committee and the CEB task force on addressing sexual harassment within the organizations of the United Nations system convened the second meeting of investigatory bodies on protection from sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment. More than 50 representatives of 19 United Nations agencies, funds and programmes, the World Bank, the International Committee of the Red Cross and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) participated. The Standing Committee also established a \$1 million fund, managed by the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, to scale up investigations through the provision of rapid grants to Committee entities to support investigations into sexual misconduct. Two grants have been provided, to one international NGO and to one national NGO.

<sup>5</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-champion-on-protection-from-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment>.

<sup>6</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-champion-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment/protection-sexual>.

11. In 2019, principle 4 of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee six core principles relating to sexual exploitation and abuse was revised<sup>7</sup> to prohibit any sexual relationship between those providing humanitarian assistance and protection and a person benefitting from such assistance or protection involving improper use of rank or position.

12. In 2018, the General Assembly revitalized the resident coordinator system to focus capacities and resources on supporting Governments in achieving the Sustainable Development Goals. In 2019, the responsibilities of resident coordinators to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse were included in their management and accountability frameworks and terms of reference. Given the critical role of the resident coordinators as the highest United Nations officials in the country and the heads of their respective United Nations country teams, the Assistant-Secretary-General for Development Coordination participates in the High-level Steering Group and is represented in the system-wide working group on sexual exploitation and abuse, to ensure that the approach of the development sector is aligned with that of the humanitarian sector and peace operations. Guidance has been provided to resident coordinators on their responsibilities, and the Special Coordinator and the Victims' Rights Advocate engage with the Development Coordination Office and resident coordinators through webinars and individually. In November 2019, four clinics were convened during the annual global retreat of resident coordinators on their role, including to facilitate assistance for victims. To ensure that the response is aligned throughout the United Nations country team, I request its members to provide notifications of any allegations that they receive to the resident coordinators in real time, as appropriate.

#### **IV. Accountability throughout the system**

13. I have instituted requirements that, taken together, provide a strengthened accountability framework designed to sustain the engagement and coherence of senior leadership system-wide. Mandatory action plans are to be submitted by all United Nations entities on measures undertaken to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, including risk mitigation, community engagement, minimum safeguarding standards and initiatives to promote a victim-centred approach. In 2019, 50 heads of United Nations departments, offices, regional commissions, agencies, funds and programmes submitted action plans. That response represented a significant increase from 2018 and 2017, when 37 and 35 action plans were received, respectively.

14. My senior leadership annually certifies that all allegations that have come to their attention are reported and that mandatory training is delivered. These measures are mirrored at the regional and field levels by several funds and programmes, including the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), UNFPA, UNHCR and the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East, which require managers at those levels to provide similar certifications. At the 2019 annual sessions of Executive Boards, Member States acknowledged the progress made by UNDP, UNFPA, UNICEF, UNHCR, the United Nations Office for Project Services (UNOPS) and the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) in tackling sexual exploitation and abuse and requested a presentation of their certifications at each annual session. In 2020, resident coordinators will participate in providing such certifications.

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<sup>7</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/inter-agency-standing-committee/iasc-six-core-principles-relating-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse>.

15. Since 2018, all CEB members, including non-Secretariat entities not mandated to report to the General Assembly, also submit certifications. In 2019, 30 non-Secretariat entities submitted certifications.

16. In 2019, the Office of the Special Coordinator reviewed the effectiveness of the action plans and certifications submitted by United Nations leadership against the results of the fourth annual survey of United Nations personnel on sexual exploitation and abuse. That review was designed to assess the perceptions of staff and affiliated personnel of the implementation by United Nations leadership of my strategy. On the basis of responses of close to 11,200 personnel from 34 United Nations entities in 47 duty stations, the Office found significant awareness of personnel of their individual responsibility to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse (almost 95 per cent). Areas requiring improvement included consistency of training, implementation and enforcement of risk mitigation measures, including curfew restriction/off-limits locations in peacekeeping and non-peacekeeping settings, reporting mechanisms and addressing a fear of retaliation when reports were made. The disaggregated results of the survey were transmitted to the heads of the participating entities, with a request that the 2020 plans include strengthened attention on these areas.

17. From January 2019, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance has regularly monitored allegations of misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, in all peace operations. The Conduct and Discipline Service of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance has broadened its role to ensure that entities of the Secretariat, in addition to peacekeeping and special political missions, receive guidance and support. To enhance organizational capacity, including to address allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, a network of conduct and discipline focal points for each Secretariat entity has been developed, together with an electronic platform to allow for collaboration and the exchange of knowledge.

18. In 2019, UNDP, UNICEF, UNHCR, UNFPA, UNOPS and UN-Women undertook external and independent victim-centred reviews of their policies and procedures on tackling sexual exploitation and abuse (and sexual harassment), resulting in concrete recommendations, including with regard to assessing the risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, in order to inform their risk management strategy. The entities agreed with all recommendations and are implementing them as part of their enterprise risk management process.

## V. Implementing partners

19. Many of the United Nations activities and programmes on the ground are delivered by implementing partners<sup>8</sup> and their personnel.

20. The United Nations is often limited in its choice of implementing partners in remote or high-risk environments, and many have capacity, training and investigation gaps. In 2019, as a result of collective efforts to raise awareness and strengthen reporting among implementing partners, there was an increase in reports by agencies, funds and programmes of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to implementing partners. While the personnel of implementing partners are not under the authority of the United Nations, I am committed to strengthening prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse by these personnel. The United Nations

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<sup>8</sup> An implementing partner is an entity to which a United Nations office or entity has entrusted the implementation of a programme and/or project specified in a signed document, along with the assumption of responsibility and accountability for the effective use of resources and the delivery of outputs. Implementing partners may include host Governments, government institutions, intergovernmental organizations and civil society organizations, including non-governmental organizations.

assesses implementing partners on their willingness to address capacity gaps and take corrective action. Cooperative agreements between non-United Nations entities and United Nations organizations include provisions requiring the acceptance of standards of conduct and allowing the United Nations to suspend or terminate such arrangements in the case of failure to implement preventive measures or take corrective action.

21. To supplement legal arrangements, the 2018 United Nations protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners contains minimum obligations for United Nations entities and their partners. These obligations include an assessment of capacity to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and regular monitoring of that capacity. For partners engaged in higher-risk activities or contexts, or with unsatisfactory capacity, the provision of direct support, capacity-building, training and guidance is a joint United Nations entity-partner responsibility. UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and the World Food Programme (WFP) are developing a harmonized screening tool to strengthen accountability and the capacity of implementing partners, which will be integrated into existing partner assessment mechanisms to avoid duplicating processes. Given that United Nations entities often work with the same partners, UNHCR funded the adaption of a face-to-face training programme on the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for all personnel of implementing partners, based on materials developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and in collaboration with a broad range of members of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee.

## **VI. Prioritizing victims' rights and dignity**

22. Progress has been made in institutionalizing a victim-centred approach, the centrepiece of my strategy, in all system-wide efforts. In December 2019, the United Nations protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse was endorsed by the High-level Steering Group. The protocol, whose development and piloting were led by the Conduct and Discipline Service and UNICEF, was finalized with the support of the Victims' Rights Advocate, in close collaboration with members of the system-wide working group on sexual exploitation and abuse. The protocol will be rolled out in all field settings in 2020. It sets out standards, in line with existing frameworks, to strengthen a coordinated, system-wide approach to the provision of assistance and support, which prioritizes the rights and dignity of victims, regardless of the affiliation of the perpetrators. It is broader in scope than the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel (General Assembly resolution [62/214](#), annex). For example, the protocol covers victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by members of non-United Nations international forces and personnel of implementing partners. This represents the evolution in the Organization's approach to victims in the more than 12 years since the adoption, in 2007, of the Comprehensive Strategy.

23. The Victims' Rights Advocate has continued energetic advocacy and engagement with Member States, United Nations entities, other intergovernmental and regional organizations, civil society and others. Reflecting continued United Nations leadership, regional organizations such as the Development Assistance Committee of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development and the North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) reached out to the Victims' Rights Advocate to ensure that a victim-centred approach was integrated into their policy frameworks. This approach is reflected in the Committee's 2019 recommendation on ending sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in development cooperation and humanitarian



assistance,<sup>9</sup> the Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network case study on how to assess the performance of multilateral organizations in preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse and harassment<sup>10</sup> and the NATO policy on prevention and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse published in January 2020.<sup>11</sup> The Victims' Rights Advocate also strengthened partnerships with the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions. In May 2019, she brought together national, regional and international experts to exchange information on best practices and lessons learned in reporting and investigations, assistance provision, protection for victims and witnesses, communication and follow-up with victims, and access to accountability, justice and remedies. The gathering included discussion of a draft statement on the rights of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse proposed by the Victims' Rights Advocate, which is intended to serve as an overarching policy tool for United Nations personnel and to raise awareness of what victims should expect from United Nations personnel and avenues of redress. This draft statement is being refined.

24. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) continues to lead discussions on draft guidance on integrating a human rights-based approach to United Nations efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, which sets out a framework intended to complement conduct and discipline and criminal accountability approaches, derived from human rights principles and standards, that places the victim at the centre of action to address sexual exploitation and abuse.

25. To assess the impact of the work of the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate since its designation in late 2017, in February 2019, the Victims' Rights Advocate convened the first face-to-face meeting of the Field Victims' Rights Advocates (now dedicated Senior Victims' Rights Officers), who operationalize the Office's policies on the ground. In April 2019, with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse focal point, the Victims' Rights Advocate visited Colombia to determine how the victim-centred pillar of my strategy was being implemented in a country with a variety of United Nations presences. In November 2019, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, she met United Nations, government and civil society interlocutors and service providers. She visited the projects supported by the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and met beneficiaries. She also met victims confidentially.

26. Pursuant to my request for a comprehensive mapping of victims' rights approaches and services available system-wide, building on the work undertaken in this area (A/72/751, para. 28), the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate is conducting a pilot mapping of victims' services, capacities and approaches in 13 countries. Findings indicate that services for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse are provided through established programmes often intended for victims of sexual and gender-based violence. Accordingly, these programmes do not always address the specific requirements of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. Gaps in services for such victims include legal assistance, livelihood support and the provision of safety and protection. Comprehensive and accurate data on victims are rarely available. While the victim assistance tracking system has been rolled out in countries with conduct and discipline teams, there is no system-wide tool to track victims, the assistance that they receive and the service providers available.

27. Field Victims' Rights Advocates have had a positive impact. In the Central African Republic, the Advocate cooperates with the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse task force and the gender-based violence and child protection subclusters to facilitate referrals to appropriate service providers and coordinate assistance for

<sup>9</sup> See [OECD/LEGAL/5020](#).

<sup>10</sup> Multilateral Organisation Performance Assessment Network, document MOPAN(2019)39\_Rev.1.

<sup>11</sup> Available at [www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news\\_173057.htm?selectedLocale=en](http://www.nato.int/cps/en/natohq/news_173057.htm?selectedLocale=en).



victims' system-wide. She has supported the resolution of paternity claims and victims' access to services and assistance, such as by opening bank accounts for the transfer of child support payments. She raised the awareness of focal points in the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic on integrating a victim-centred approach when addressing allegations and service provision, as well as of journalists on ethical reporting of cases and victim stigmatization. She trains national investigation officers, appointed by Member State troop-contributing countries, on victim-centred approaches to interviewing and regularly accompanies the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) investigative team to ensure that interviews are carried out in an appropriate environment and that victims can gain access to necessary assistance.

28. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Field Victims' Rights Advocate collaborates with the Conduct and Discipline Team of the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUSCO), with the support of UNFPA and UNICEF, to establish guidelines on assistance to victims. These guidelines are directed towards ensuring that the United Nations provides victims with assistance within 24 to 72 hours of receipt of an allegation and that a dedicated support person accompanies the victim throughout. Between 2016 and 2019, 70 victims were referred to UNFPA and UNICEF for support, including psychological and counselling services, and emergency and regular medical assistance. MONUSCO has filled service gaps by referring victims to mission medical facilities and providing transportation so that they can gain access to services. The Advocate works with 42 community-based complaint networks, established in locations where the Mission has the capacity to support the implementation of preventive measures and reporting protocols, as well as awareness-raising and training activities. During 2019, she supported three projects funded by the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. She collaborates with the MONUSCO police and military components to ensure that preventive measures are being implemented, as well as with the established protection from sexual exploitation and abuse networks to ensure consistency and coherence in assistance to victims. Furthermore, in coordination with the Conduct and Discipline Team, the Advocate worked to support the conduct of two court martials, in March and October 2019, in which nine victims alleging sexual exploitation and abuse gave testimony.

29. In Haiti, the Field Victims' Rights Advocate/Senior Victims' Rights Officer coordinates with legal aid organizations and lawyers to provide victims with legal assistance and facilitate the resolution of pending paternity and child support claims, ensuring that victims are provided with information and updates on the status of their claims, including through regular meetings with them. She facilitated the continuation of a joint United Nations country team project, initiated in 2018, which provides basic material, educational, psychosocial and livelihood support to victims and children born of sexual exploitation and abuse.

30. In South Sudan, the Field Victims' Rights Advocate ensures that timely assistance is provided to victims and that medical costs covered through petty cash area provided by the United Nations Mission in South Sudan (UNMISS). She facilitated the receipt of financial support from a father of a child born of sexual exploitation and abuse. With the protection from sexual exploitation and abuse task force, she established community-based complaint mechanisms throughout the country and provided training for focal points and community members on standards of conduct and reporting allegations. She also oversees a project financed by the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, providing livelihood assistance for victims.

31. The trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse, managed by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, which chairs the

trust fund's review committee, has funded 12 projects, of which, 6 were initiated in 2019 and implemented in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of Congo and Liberia. Along with the Victims' Rights Advocate, the Department briefed Member States on the trust fund in June 2019, highlighting the impact of the projects on victims and communities affected by sexual exploitation and abuse. An awareness-raising and outreach campaign on the trust fund will be conducted in 2020 and regular updates on the projects will be provided to encourage additional voluntary contributions. I am deeply grateful to those Member States that have contributed to the trust fund. I encourage all to support it, because our compassion must be backed with the resources to address the needs of victims.

## VII. Risk management

32. The sexual exploitation and abuse risk management toolkit developed for peacekeeping and special political missions in 2018 has been available to entities throughout the system since June 2019. It provides a systemic approach to identifying, assessing and treating the risks associated with sexual exploitation and abuse. In 2019, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance launched a comprehensive misconduct risk management tool as a complementary approach to its 2018 sexual exploitation and abuse misconduct risk management toolkit. UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and UN-WOMEN have also embedded risk mitigation into their corporate enterprise risk management systems and will make sexual exploitation and abuse one of the mandatory risks to assess in 2020.

33. Acts of sexual exploitation and abuse are now clearly recognized as a risk to our programmatic work. In peacekeeping and special political missions, a review of such acts are integrated into the performance-related processes applicable to peace operations, including predeployment visits and in-mission assessments. In 2019, the Multi-Partner Trust Fund Office, UNDP and Member State donors signed a legal agreement on the administration of United Nations pooled funding,<sup>12</sup> to mainstream the consideration of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment as a programmatic risk to the fund. Under the agreement, all United Nations entities seeking pooled funding are required to comply with the public reporting mechanism to report allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

34. Clear Check is an information-sharing tool designed to prevent the re-employment of individuals against whom allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse have been substantiated or who left the Organization prior to the conclusion of an investigation into such allegations in any part of the United Nations. Currently, 25 United Nations entities have committed to participating in the screening tool.<sup>13</sup> In October 2019, the Secretariat hosted a clinic to provide technical and operational guidance on the system and to encourage the establishment of a community of Clear Check users.

35. Training for all Secretariat personnel<sup>14</sup> and for personnel of 18 agencies, funds and programmes has been mandatory since 2016. In 2019, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance initiated the development of a programme for future police and military commanders on how to address misconduct within United Nations peace operations and to strengthen exchanges between Member States and the Secretariat. In 2020, the Department will integrate an additional

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<sup>12</sup> See <http://mptf.undp.org/document/legal>.

<sup>13</sup> The Secretariat (23 departments at Headquarters, 7 offices away from Headquarters and the 5 regional commissions), 12 United Nations funds and programmes and 12 United Nations specialized and related agencies.

<sup>14</sup> Prior to 2016, only peacekeeping and special political missions received compulsory training on sexual exploitation and abuse.

induction information package into advance assessment visits to Member States prior to the deployment of new contingents. OIOS provides training for military national investigations officers and organizes training on forensic interviewing of children for investigators from United Nations entities and international governmental and non-governmental organizations. In 2019, 64 investigators benefited from such training, and 72 participants from troop-contributing countries were trained in investigations, with an emphasis on sexual exploitation and abuse. The Secretariat regularly engages with the African Union, including through jointly organized workshops where policies and methodologies on conduct and discipline and human rights are discussed.

36. In 2019, IOM, UNDP, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNOPS and WFP began to coordinate on delivering joint global training for focal points on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse from selected priority countries, with a view to implementing a global roll-out of relevant inter-agency training initiatives. In 2020, the Development Coordination Office will participate.

37. I have introduced greater transparency in the reporting of incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse. All United Nations system entities are required to report to me on allegations where there is sufficient information to identify a possible act of sexual exploitation or abuse involving an identifiable victim or perpetrator.<sup>15</sup> Prior to 2019, there were discrepancies between OIOS and the Conduct and Discipline Service in the presentation of such data. In 2019, OIOS and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance worked with the Office of the Special Coordinator to align their data and reporting within the parameters of the Secretary-General's bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#)). UNICEF employs an internal notification alert system whereby senior managers at regional and country level are required to notify the Office of the Executive Director of any credible allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse reported at the country level.

38. In May 2019, public reporting was enhanced through the introduction of an electronic tool (iReport SEA Tracker) that tracks the trajectory of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and improves the presentation of relevant data related to United Nations entities, other than peacekeeping or special political missions. An incident reporting form was developed in 2017 to ensure uniformity and consistency in information collection on allegations throughout the system. Piloted in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the form has been rolled out for use by all United Nations entities in the Central African Republic, Jordan and South Sudan. A digitized form is being developed collaboratively by the Secretariat, OIOS, UNDP and UNICEF, in consultation with the system-wide working group on sexual exploitation and abuse, and will be launched in the third quarter of 2020.

39. I have strengthened administrative investigations into allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse, which represent 11 per cent of the workload of OIOS, although that percentage may be higher in the missions. The target time to complete an investigation is six months; within OIOS, the average completion time is 6.3 months. OIOS works closely with UNICEF and the Victims' Rights Advocate to implement a child-sensitive and victim-centred approach to its investigations. As a result, investigators have a greater understanding of the power imbalance between victim and perpetrator and are more sensitive when interviewing victims and when keeping them informed of progress in an investigation.

40. Pursuant to my 2017 request that United Nations entities strengthen their investigative methods and process, OIOS, as Chair of the United Nations Representatives

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<sup>15</sup> Data on all reported allegations are available at [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/data-allegations-un-system-wide](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/data-allegations-un-system-wide).

of Investigation Services standing task force on improving investigation of sexual exploitation and abuse, is coordinating with agency, fund and programme investigation services to improve timeliness and efficiency of investigations. Two meetings were held in 2019 to share lessons learned. Throughout the system, allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse can be reported anonymously and are prioritized for investigation, with strict timelines for completion. UNICEF and UNOPS have increased their investigative capacity and reduced timelines for sexual misconduct investigations (averaging less than 100 days).

41. I am very mindful of the risk of retaliation that may accompany a report of sexual exploitation and abuse. OIOS has improved processes to notify partners in the field, including security services, senior managers and the Field Victims' Rights Advocates, of such risks. In 2018 and 2019, UNFPA, UNHCR, UNICEF and UN-Women updated their policies on protection against retaliation, to bring them into line with the Secretary-General's bulletin on protection against retaliation ([ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1](#)).

42. As an employer, the United Nations takes all measures at its disposal to address sexual exploitation and abuse committed by its personnel, including through administrative investigations and disciplinary sanctions. Administrative or disciplinary action taken by the United Nations does not preclude criminal investigations by national authorities, who have exclusive prosecutorial authority. Indeed, the United Nations takes steps to ensure that allegations against its personnel that may constitute crimes are brought to the attention of appropriate national authorities so that they may be investigated. In line with the Comprehensive Strategy, the United Nations has also strengthened its facilitation and support of paternity claims in cases where children are born of sexual exploitation and abuse, to ensure the realization of parental responsibility, including by encouraging the appointment of national focal points.

43. Information regarding disciplinary sanctions taken by the Organization against Secretariat staff who have engaged in misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, is contained in my annual report on the practice of the Secretary-General in disciplinary matters and possible criminal behaviour ([A/74/64](#)). Information regarding personnel of the United Nations funds and programmes and specialized agencies is issued in their own reports.

#### **Facilitating criminal accountability**

44. The role of the United Nations in realizing criminal accountability for its personnel who have committed sexual crimes involves two actions: (a) ensuring that allegations of which it becomes aware are referred to Member States as a priority; and (b) cooperating with national investigations and prosecutions. The Organization cooperates with national authorities to facilitate the proper administration of justice, regardless of whether the matter was initially referred by the United Nations or the authorities commenced their process independently. That is without prejudice to the rights of any victim or witness to report allegations of criminal acts of sexual exploitation and abuse to national authorities at any time.

45. Information received from Member States on the status of investigations and prosecutions in both referral and cooperation cases, including those involving sexual exploitation and abuse, is provided in my annual report on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission ([A/74/145](#), annexes I and II).<sup>16</sup> That annual report does not cover allegations concerning members of national military

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<sup>16</sup> Annex I to the report on criminal accountability ([A/74/145](#)) contains information regarding each case referred to national authorities by the Organization and the status of actions taken by the States concerned, in accordance with General Assembly resolution [62/63](#). Annex II contains information concerning cases in which Member States have informed the United Nations of investigations in the last three years.

contingents in United Nations peacekeeping operations which are always subject to the exclusive criminal jurisdiction of their State of nationality, pursuant to the model memorandum of understanding for military contingents governing the contribution of troops to the United Nations (see [A/C.5/69/18](#), ch. 9). Information received from Member States contributing national military contingents is available on the website maintained by the Conduct and Discipline Service.<sup>17</sup>

46. Between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2019, 14 credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against United Nations officials and experts on mission were referred to their States of nationality (see [A/74/145](#), annex I). The Organization also cooperated with competent national authorities in 13 cases of alleged sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations officials and experts on mission, two of which resulted in a conviction and sentence (*ibid.*, annex II). In addition, the Organization provided cooperation in matters involving other types of personnel and third parties, including members of national contingents operating under a Security Council mandate, but not under United Nations command.

47. OHCHR supports Member States in their investigations of allegations against non-United Nations forces and personnel, as relevant, and offers collaboration, including through the provision of information or technical advice, the facilitation of contact with victims and the discussion of protection measures. However, OHCHR is not aware of national proceedings leading to sanctions for perpetrators in relation to the cases documented in my reports since 2016.<sup>18</sup>

## VIII. Engagement with Member States and civil society

48. In 2017, I pledged to work closely with Member States on structural, legal and operational measures to make zero tolerance a reality. I also set out to draw on the guidance of those affected and civil society, including local communities, to build a network of support.

49. I encourage Member States to give greater visibility to their initiatives to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse, including information on the status of administrative and judicial processes, and reiterate my call to those who have not already done so to introduce or strengthen extraterritorial jurisdiction for sexual crimes committed by their nationals while in the employ of the United Nations. The voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse and my circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations remain open for participation. These initiatives constitute visible demonstrations of our common commitment to end impunity and to strengthen measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse beyond existing legal obligations, for example, in the model memorandum of understanding.

50. I am pleased with the support provided by Member States with regard to Security Council resolution [2272 \(2016\)](#). The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance serves as the secretariat to the related standing review committee, which reviews the deployments of Member States in line with the criteria set out in the resolution. In 2019, the Department and OICT finalized the creation of

<sup>17</sup> All data on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are provided in the supplementary information to the present report, in English only, available at [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/secretary-generals-reports](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/secretary-generals-reports). Section III.B of that supplementary information contains data regarding allegations involving members of national military contingents under United Nations command, subject to the exclusive criminal jurisdiction of the States contributing such personnel.

<sup>18</sup> See sections related to non-United Nations international forces in [A/71/818](#) and [A/71/818/Corr.1](#), [A/72/751](#) and [A/72/751/Corr.1](#) and [A/73/744](#).

a secure database to support implementation of decisions of the review committee, which will be integrated into the review process in 2020.

51. On issues of sexual exploitation and abuse, civil society serves as a critical interface between affected communities and the United Nations system and is a crucial partner in efforts to improve our response. In February 2019, the Civil Society Advisory Board on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse became operational. The Board's six experts<sup>19</sup> advise me on ways to strengthen engagement with civil society, in order to address sexual exploitation and abuse by both United Nations personnel and members of non-United Nations forces operating pursuant to a Security Council mandate.

## **IX. Improving strategic communications for education and transparency**

52. The Department of Global Communications strives to increase awareness of the conduct and behaviour expected from United Nations personnel within the United Nations and in the communities we serve. In 2019, the Department led the first pilot training for senior United Nations leaders, aimed at strengthening their ability to communicate internally and externally; a second programme was to be delivered in the first quarter of 2020. In September 2019, the United Nations and my circle of leadership engaged in a high-profile social media campaign,<sup>20</sup> reaffirming their support and commitment to combating sexual exploitation and abuse and individually and collectively pledging to end impunity and to implement a victim-centred approach. A dedicated website<sup>21</sup> serves to enhance transparency through the regular publication of all allegations brought to my attention. Multilingual multimedia news platforms provide updates on progress in the Organization's efforts to tackle the scourge. In March 2019, a United Nations stamp<sup>22</sup> was issued to raise awareness of the importance of speaking out to end sexual exploitation and abuse.

## **X. Overview of data on allegations**

53. Comprehensive information regarding allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to personnel in peacekeeping and special political missions, other United Nations system entities, implementing partners and non-United Nations forces authorized by a Security Council mandate, covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2019, is available online.<sup>15</sup>

### **A. Peacekeeping and special political missions**

54. In 2019, 80 allegations were reported with sufficient information to identify at least one act of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by at least one identifiable perpetrator or against at least one identifiable victim, involving personnel in

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<sup>19</sup> The six experts currently serving on the Civil Society Advisory Board are as follows: Joy Ezeilo (Nigeria); Rosa Freedman (United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland); Pablo de Greiff (Colombia); Adrijana Hanušić Bećirović (Bosnia and Herzegovina); Vitit Muntarbhorn (Thailand); and Muna B. Ndulo (Zambia).

<sup>20</sup> See [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/twitter-moment](https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/twitter-moment).

<sup>21</sup> Available at [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/](https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/).

<sup>22</sup> Available at <https://unstamps.org/shop/2019-ny-definitive-us-0-85-full-sheet>.

peacekeeping and special political missions. This was an increase compared with the 56 allegations reported in 2018<sup>23</sup> and the 63 reported in 2017.

55. The 80 allegations reported in 2019 can be broken down as follows:

(a) The number of alleged victims (92) and perpetrators (106) in fact decreased in 2019, as fewer reports involved multiple victims or perpetrators, with the majority involving a single victim and perpetrator. In comparison, the allegations reported in 2018 involved 102 victims and 108 perpetrators, while those reported in 2017 involved 143 victims and 165 perpetrators;<sup>24</sup>

(b) The majority of the allegations (70 per cent) related to MINUSCA (41) and MONUSCO (15). Allegations related to UNMISS, MINUSMA, the African Union-United Nations Hybrid Operation in Darfur, the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon, the former United Nations Mission in Liberia and the former United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti accounted for 23 per cent. The remaining 7 per cent were related to three special political missions, namely, the Office of the Special Envoy of the Secretary-General for Syria, the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia and the United Nations Integrated Peacebuilding Office in Guinea-Bissau;<sup>25</sup>

(c) The proportion of allegations of sexual abuse is the lowest recorded since 2010, with 24 allegations (30 per cent) related to acts of sexual abuse and 56 to sexual exploitation;

(d) There were 37 allegations associated with paternity claims.

56. The increase in the total number of allegations reported in 2019 reflects increases in allegations involving the following categories of personnel:

(a) Allegations involving civilian personnel, international or locally recruited staff and contractors' personnel in several peacekeeping and special political missions (25 allegations in 2019, compared with 13 in 2018 and 11 in 2017). An analysis of each allegation reported in 2019 is being undertaken to assist peacekeeping and special political missions in identifying and addressing any gaps in prevention and risk management;

(b) Allegations involving military personnel (49 in 2019, compared with 39 in 2018 and 41 in 2017). While 32 of these allegations involve MINUSCA, more than half of the allegations pertaining to MINUSCA related to incidents occurring in 2017 or earlier;

(c) Allegations involving police or other government-provided personnel, other than military personnel (six in 2019, as compared with four in 2018).

57. In terms of investigations completed since 2010, 42 per cent of allegations were substantiated, while 58 per cent were unsubstantiated. Investigations conducted by the United Nations into allegations received in 2018 or earlier have been completed, with the exception of one allegation reported in 2018 related to MONUSCO, where efforts remain under way to locate and interview the victim.

58. Information remains pending on investigations conducted by Member States with regard to 24 allegations involving military personnel reported in 2018 or earlier, namely, 10 allegations received in 2018, 6 received in 2017 and 8 received in 2016 or earlier. In addition, for allegations involving military or police personnel that have

<sup>23</sup> Two additional allegations were recorded for 2018, in addition to the 54 indicated in [A/73/744](#), as acts of sexual exploitation and abuse were uncovered during investigations completed in 2019, although they had not been identified when the allegations were initially reported in 2018.

<sup>24</sup> Updated information as compared with data published in 2018 and 2017.

<sup>25</sup> Additional information and details on allegations, including on the status of investigations, are available at <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.



been substantiated through investigations, information on accountability measures taken by Member States remains pending for 9 allegations reported in 2018, 18 reported in 2017 and 30 reported in 2016 or earlier.

## **B. United Nations entities (other than peacekeeping operations and special political missions) and their implementing partners**

59. Since January 2019, the reporting of all sexual exploitation and abuse allegations related to United Nations entities other than peacekeeping operations and special political missions is managed through the iReport SEA Tracker tool. Since August 2019, data on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse dating back to 2017 are recorded and published on the United Nations public website.<sup>15</sup>

### **1. Allegations involving United Nations staff and United Nations related personnel other than in peacekeeping or special political missions**

60. With regard to personnel of the agencies, funds and programmes, 95 allegations reported in 2019 concerned United Nations staff and United Nations related personnel, compared with 93 allegations reported in 2018.<sup>26</sup> Of those 95 allegations, 29 related to incidents that occurred in 2019 and 19 related to incidents that had occurred in previous years. The dates of the remaining 47 reported incidents require further assessment. Regarding the status of the allegations, 4 allegations have been substantiated, 5 were unsubstantiated, 35 are under investigation, 26 are at the preliminary assessment stage and 25 were closed. The bases for closing those 25 allegations included a lack of evidence and separation of the alleged perpetrators, either at their own initiative or at the initiative of the Organization owing to other grounds of misconduct.

61. Of the 93 allegations reported in 2018, 16 remain under investigation, 7 were substantiated, 46 were unsubstantiated and 24 are closed.

### **2. Allegations involving personnel of implementing partners**

62. Increased collaboration across United Nations offices has allowed the Organization to improve its identification of allegations associated with implementing partners and avoid duplication in reporting.

63. Of the allegations reported in 2019, 164 relate to personnel of implementing partners, compared with 113 in 2018. Of those 164 allegations, 32 occurred in 2019, 25 had occurred in previous years, and the dates of the remaining 107 incidents are unknown. Regarding the status of the allegations, 12 have been substantiated, 13 were unsubstantiated, 69 are under investigation, 27 are at the preliminary assessment stage, 24 have been referred back to the implementing partner, 8 are closed and the status of 11 is unknown.

## **C. Non-United Nations forces**

64. In 2019, the United Nations received one allegation related to sexual exploitation involving a member of a formerly deployed non-United Nations security force. The case has been referred to the concerned Member State for investigation. In addition to follow-up conducted with the Member State on that case, OHCHR follows up on cases reported in previous years.

<sup>26</sup> Any discrepancies in figures compared with those presented in the previous report (A/73/344) are due to the implementation of the system-wide iReport SEA Tracker tool, which has allowed for better validation and monitoring of data.

65. The number of allegations reported to the United Nations involving non-United Nations security forces has decreased since public reporting began in 2017. Reasons for this may be that fewer non-United Nations security forces are deployed in comparison with previous years; United Nations access to locations where sexual exploitation and abuse may occur is restricted; and the absence of monitoring presences in most of those contexts may lead to a reduction in reporting, rather than a reduction in incidents.

## XI. Conclusions

66. The system is delivering on my pledges to put its own house in order, by strengthening accountability measures and putting victims at the centre of efforts. We continue to strengthen reporting and complaint mechanisms throughout the system. A key issue remains as to how to balance victims' rights to confidentiality with our organizations' responsibilities to report all allegations that come to our attention and to investigate serious sexual misconduct allegations, especially when a victim chooses not to pursue a complaint. In order to balance those competing principles, I have issued instructions that all allegations received or brought to the attention of United Nations personnel must be reported. Victims and witnesses have control over their personally identifiable information and may choose not to participate in the investigative process; they do not, however, have control over the fact that any alleged incident must be reported, nor over how such allegations are addressed by the United Nations. United Nations officials must therefore fulfil their obligation to victims and witnesses to report any allegation that comes to their attention.

67. Many challenges remain, in particular with regard to the lack of dedicated services for victims and large gaps in the comprehensiveness of the services available. While four Field Victims' Rights Advocates are currently in place, most countries in which United Nations entities are present do not have a designated United Nations focal point to ensure that a victim-centred approach is taken from the start of a case, when allegations are reported, to its closure, and that victims receive the assistance and support they need throughout that process. I therefore reiterate my call for the designation of additional victims' rights advocates, in order to create a network of such advocates across the peacekeeping, humanitarian and development sectors.

68. Resources for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in the Secretariat, in particular for assistance to victims, remain scarce. We must go further: a one-stop point of call to access funding for interventions, including on an emergency basis, should be established and made accessible system-wide. I encourage more support for the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and more contributions from Member States. Funds should also be flexibly disbursed in order to meet the individual needs of victims, especially if there are cases where paternity has been claimed or established. Building on the victim assistance tracking system, a comprehensive database should be made available and used system-wide.

69. I thank Member States for their engagement and support on our work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. That support has enabled the Special Coordinator and the Victims' Rights Advocate, as well as other system entities, to continue their crucial work. This is a joint endeavour, and only by working together can we hold those accountable for their actions and effectively combat the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse. We must remain active and vigilant.

**70. The Secretary-General recommends that the General Assembly take note of the present report.**