



# 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 has been prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolutions [71/278](#), [71/297](#), [72/312](#), [73/302](#) and [75/321](#). It contains updated information on United Nations measures to strengthen the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.



## I. Introduction

1. In 2017, I introduced a system-wide strategy to improve the Organization's approach to preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse (A/71/818 and A/71/818/Corr.1). The strategy was focused on four priorities: putting victims' rights and dignity at the forefront of our efforts; ending impunity; engaging civil society and external partners; and improving strategic communications for education and transparency. Over the past five years, the United Nations system has taken robust measures against sexual exploitation and abuse by any of its personnel, including by working closely with Member States and civil society. The Organization has strengthened prevention and response actions across the United Nations peace, development and humanitarian pillars; enhanced leadership accountability; introduced greater transparency, including publicly reporting data on allegations; intensified engagement with external actors; and widened and deepened a victim-centred approach. My annual reports,<sup>1</sup> dedicated website,<sup>2</sup> fact sheets and information portals highlight these actions.

2. Despite clear gains, allegations implicating United Nations personnel regrettably continue to emerge. In 2021, allegations relating to United Nations peacekeeping personnel in the Central African Republic led to the repatriation of a military contingent (see S/2021/867). An independent commission established by the World Health Organization (WHO) reported on cases concerning personnel responding to the tenth Ebola virus epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo.<sup>3</sup> These reports demonstrate that much remains to be done and efforts must be stepped up. At the same time, I underscore that sexual exploitation and abuse are rooted in abuse of power, gender inequality, entrenched harmful practices and structural vulnerability linked to economic and social disparities, exacerbated by the multifaceted impacts of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic.

3. Given the large scale of United Nations humanitarian, peace and other operations globally, it is foreseeable that United Nations personnel may be in circumstances in which there is a heightened risk of such misconduct because of their close interaction with those in vulnerable situations. I am committed to scaling up actions at the country level with upfront investment to tackle the root causes these wrongs and to identifying and mitigating such risk.

4. We must strengthen our leadership and organizational culture of gender equality and intolerance of sexual misconduct, create a global framework for cooperation with States on prevention and enhance our engagement with and support to communities, especially women's groups and grass-roots actors. The need for collective independent investigation capacity in high-risk contexts should be recognized and appropriate organizational structures put in place to respond.

## II. Progress, lessons learned and persistent challenges

5. Over the past five years, we have strengthened policies and protocols, introduced mandatory training, conducted risk assessments, institutionalized action plans and senior leaders' management letters, engaged staff through annual surveys,

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<sup>1</sup> 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).

<sup>2</sup> See [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse).

<sup>3</sup> World Health Organization (WHO), "Final report of the independent commission on the review of sexual abuse and exploitation during the response to the 10th Ebola virus disease epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo", 28 September 2021. Available at [www.who.int/publications/m/item/final-report-of-the-independent-commission-on-the-review-of-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-ebola-drc](http://www.who.int/publications/m/item/final-report-of-the-independent-commission-on-the-review-of-sexual-abuse-and-exploitation-ebola-drc).

publicly reported on the status of all allegations, proceeded with the separation or dismissal of staff with substantiated allegations and, where warranted, repatriated alleged perpetrators, including military contingents. In 2021, to align the humanitarian, development and peace and security pillars on policies and practices related to combating sexual exploitation and abuse, performance indicators were integrated and harmonized across the three pillars. Heads of United Nations entities provide strategic plans and heads of United Nations country teams provide operational plans in collaboration with country team members. A review of the 191 plans received in 2021 indicates that all United Nations entities have developed policies and standards of conduct on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Workplans serve to implement the policies and prioritize actions to ensure victims' access to assistance, accelerate investigations and strengthen accountability, training and overall risk management, including in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.

6. I institutionalized standing bodies to address protection from sexual exploitation and abuse that reflect the seriousness of my commitment. The High-level Steering Group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse<sup>4</sup> oversees the implementation of my strategy. My Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse promotes the implementation of aligned and coordinated approaches across the system's more than 30 affiliated programmes, funds and specialized agencies, all with their own membership, leadership and budgets. The Victims' Rights Advocate champions the rights and dignity of victims. The development pillar updated its management accountability framework<sup>5</sup> in 2021 to clarify the roles of the resident coordinator and the United Nations country team in creating an environment that prohibits sexual misconduct. The Inter-Agency Standing Committee<sup>6</sup> coordinates humanitarian actors and action within and outside the United Nations by providing technical support and fostering cooperative approaches among country-based coordinators<sup>7</sup> through the development of policies, guidelines and tools, the facilitation of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse networks and the implementation of action plans. The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR) leads United Nations efforts to integrate a human rights-based approach into policies and practices on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and encourages human rights mechanisms to consider sexual exploitation and abuse in their review of the implementation of States' obligations.

<sup>4</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, 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 United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, 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 International Organization for Migration, the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund, the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the United Nations Children's Fund, the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women), the World Food Programme and WHO. The Development Coordination Office and the Office of Internal Oversight Services participate as observers.

<sup>5</sup> United Nations Sustainable Development Group, *Management and Accountability Framework of the UN Development and Resident Coordinator System*, consolidated version, 15 September 2021. Available at <https://unsdg.un.org/resources/management-and-accountability-framework-un-development-and-resident-coordinator-system>.

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

<sup>7</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/accountability-and-inclusion/new-generic-terms-reference-psea-network-psea-focal-points-and-psea-coordinators>.

These accountability mechanisms have an impact. The most recent of six annual staff surveys administered by the Special Coordinator indicates that, of the more than 25,000 United Nations personnel across 118 duty stations, 98 per cent know the standards and prohibitions and 96 per cent believe that the leadership at their duty station takes prevention and response seriously.

7. Across the United Nations, the imperative to focus on the rights and dignity of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse is now well accepted through policy and action. This cultural change forms the foundation for integrating a human rights-based, victim-centred approach into the conceptualization and design of all major United Nations operations and projects, including prevention, and the assessment and selection of civilian and uniformed personnel.

8. To measure progress in the humanitarian arena over the past decade and identify areas requiring additional efforts, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA), as the Inter-Agency Standing Committee Champion on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment for 2021, commissioned an independent external review of the Committee's progress from 2011 to 2021.<sup>8</sup> It was found in the review that, in particular over the past four years, leaders had emphasized strategic priorities, implemented a victim-centred approach and strengthened reporting and investigations. At the global and country levels, accountability for prevention was enhanced and the roles of actors on the ground were clarified, albeit not consistently in all contexts, programme sectors or clusters. However, the scale, predictability and consistency of resourcing remain constrained and more is required to engender an understanding of the content of a victim-centred approach and the requirements for its implementation. In 2022, the Committee will focus on the application of the recommendations of the review.

9. Advances have been made to prevent individuals with substantiated allegations of sexual misconduct from moving across the various parts of the United Nations through expanded use of the Clear Check database.<sup>9</sup> WHO has used the database to screen potential staff and consultants, including all the polio experts in its database of 2,400 personnel. The United Nations Development Programme and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) expanded screening capacity by including all contract types in Clear Check vetting. UNHCR is piloting participation in the Steering Committee for Humanitarian Response misconduct disclosure scheme. I encourage discussion of how these parallel screening systems could operate together.

### III. Accountability through leadership

10. Leaders set the tone for acceptable behaviour and are responsible for the transmission of unambiguous messages, in words and action, that sexual exploitation and abuse will not be tolerated and that perpetrators will be held to account. Initiatives and policies alone without unambiguous leadership at every level and in every context, in particular in environments in which the United Nations is mandated to protect, aid and serve, will be insufficient (see General Assembly resolution [57/306](#)). Leaders must emphasize our common responsibility to report and act against sexual misconduct, including through embedded responsibility in performance agreements and management evaluation.

<sup>8</sup> Inter-Agency Standing Committee, *External Review: Global Report on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment 2021* (Geneva, December 2021). Available at <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/2021-iasc-external-review-pseash>.

<sup>9</sup> See <https://unscsb.org/screening-database-clearcheck>.

11. The effectiveness of United Nations peace operations is directly linked to the high standards of conduct and discipline of the personnel deployed (see Security Council resolution 2272 (2016)). In September 2021, in response to credible reports of widespread sexual exploitation and abuse, combined with a history of non-responsiveness by national authorities to allegations from earlier years, I repatriated a contingent from the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic (MINUSCA). To reinforce my actions and strengthen support to leadership in peace operations, the Secretariat established a multidisciplinary team to examine, in close collaboration with MINUSCA and other field missions, the factors that contributed to a higher number of allegations in 2021. Additional measures to address deficits in the selection, training and performance of troops, risk management, investigations and victim assistance across all peacekeeping and special political missions are being prioritized.

12. Secretariat leadership engages with mission leadership and troop- and police-contributing countries through dedicated plenary and bilateral meetings and mechanisms unique to peacekeeping. Critical among these mechanisms is Action for Peacekeeping Plus, including a focus on the accountability of peacekeepers, which encompasses upholding the United Nations standards of conduct, highlighted during the United Nations Peacekeeping Ministerial Conference in Seoul in December 2021. High-level engagement with Member States on prevention and accountability for pending allegations of misconduct is ongoing.

13. Work continues on the Pipeline to Peacekeeping Command Programme, aimed at strengthening the leadership capacity of senior and middle-level commanders to foster effective conduct and discipline in a peacekeeping operation. A reinforcement training package for commanders, building on existing sexual exploitation and abuse e-learning on the role of commanders in the prevention of and response to misconduct, is under development.

14. Resident coordinators and humanitarian coordinators continuously look for ways to strengthen their field leadership responsibility and collective action, which is discussed at their annual humanitarian retreats. Good practices include a unified hotline with trained responders in Iraq and the use of pooled humanitarian funding mechanisms to implement country-level action plans on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse.

15. WHO responded to alleged incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse by its personnel and affiliated humanitarian workers during the response to the tenth Ebola virus epidemic outbreak in the Democratic Republic of the Congo by establishing an independent commission in 2020.<sup>10</sup> In its management response<sup>11</sup> to the report of the independent commission, WHO committed to putting the victims at the heart of prevention and response; establishing practices to engage its entire workforce by communicating and enforcing individual and managerial accountability; and reforming WHO culture, structures, systems and capacity. A team led by the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, comprising the World Food Programme, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF), UNFPA and the Field Victims' Rights Advocate, visited the Central African Republic in April 2021 at the request of the Deputy Special Representative for MINUSCA and Humanitarian Coordinator to

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<sup>10</sup> WHO, "Final report of the independent commission on the review of sexual abuse and exploitation during the response to the 10th Ebola virus disease epidemic in the Democratic Republic of the Congo".

<sup>11</sup> WHO, "Preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse: WHO management response", 21 October 2021, available at [www.who.int/publications/m/item/who-management-response-plan](http://www.who.int/publications/m/item/who-management-response-plan). See also the report of the WHO Director General dated 10 January 2022 on the prevention of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment (document EB150/33).

review coordination in response to sexual exploitation and abuse. WHO, UNICEF, UNFPA, the Field Victims' Rights Advocate and Committee partners visited the Democratic Republic of the Congo in November 2021 to identify gaps in victim support and strengthen community awareness, networks and community-based complaint mechanisms. The United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women (UN-Women) developed an inclusive workplace strategy to strengthen leadership by promoting culture change and focusing on people management, respect for diversity, inclusion and standards of conduct.

16. The high turnover of personnel, in particular in field leadership positions, demands that awareness of policies on sexual misconduct be reinforced constantly. The Special Coordinator, in consultation with the heads of United Nations entities, will examine how routine visits to United Nations operational presences can sustain awareness of the standards of conduct and identify how the United Nations system can bolster leadership and provide other support.

## IV. Risk management

17. The United Nations should not fund any activity, engage in any programmes or establish any office without assessing and responsibly mitigating the risks or conditions that might lead to sexual exploitation and abuse.

18. In 2019, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance rolled out guidance providing a set of misconduct risk mitigation tools<sup>12</sup> to promote an integrated Secretariat-wide approach to upholding United Nations standards of conduct by all personnel – civilian and uniformed. These tools are designed to help leaders, managers and commanders be transparent about how they intend to prevent and respond to misconduct by their personnel and hold them to account by being clear about “who does what and by when”. These tools underscore that United Nations civilian and uniformed personnel often interact with communities affected by humanitarian or economic crises, conflict or displacement and that risk mitigation of sexual exploitation and abuse must be conducted in an appropriate manner from planning through start-up to implementation of the operations to take account of factors that may create or heighten risks. Building on this work, the Special Coordinator is exploring the development of an impact statement on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse for all newly considered United Nations field-based activities under my authority to ensure that foreseeable risks are identified and planned for.

19. Several Inter-Agency Standing Committee entities have developed agency-specific risk assessment tools.<sup>13</sup> The WHO tool will be piloted in several countries in 2022. The UNHCR tool was launched in 2020 and sexual exploitation and abuse mitigation was integrated into its COVID-19 risk register. To monitor performance of its framework to address sexual exploitation and abuse and its contribution to progress system-wide, UN-Women developed a performance indicator for its integrated results and resources framework strategic plan for 2022–2025, adopted during its second regular session in September 2021. As part of its Committee championship, UNFPA established a roster of trained and vetted inter-agency protection from sexual

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<sup>12</sup> United Nations, “Misconduct risk management tools”, September 2019. Available at [https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/misconduct\\_risk\\_mngt\\_tools\\_consolidated\\_vf\\_24\\_09\\_2019.pdf](https://conduct.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/misconduct_risk_mngt_tools_consolidated_vf_24_09_2019.pdf).

<sup>13</sup> See the Inter-Agency Standing Committee prevention of sexual abuse and exploitation checklist, available at <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/psea-check-list-eng>.

exploitation and abuse coordinators to allow for rapid deployment to enhance risk management.

### **Implementing partners**

20. The United Nations relies on implementing partners,<sup>14</sup> whose personnel are not under the Organization's direct authority, to deliver many of its programmes. Significant efforts have been made to encourage them to adopt and implement measures to prevent, respond to and report sexual exploitation and abuse.

21. In 2021, to address the risk that the personnel of implementing partners may engage in these behaviours, the World Food Programme, UNHCR, UNFPA and UNICEF piloted the United Nations implementing partner prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse capacity assessment,<sup>15</sup> a tool to screen common partners, and provided guidance on operationalizing the 2018 protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners. In 2021, UNFPA assessed 60 per cent of its non-governmental organization (NGO) partners and led an inter-agency team to develop a resource package for United Nations entities to facilitate a harmonized approach. UNICEF and UNHCR ensure that all implementing partnerships have agreements, training and tools emphasizing the importance of a victim-centred approach, including principles such as safety, confidentiality, respect and non-discrimination. The United Nations Development Programme developed materials, including sample letters and generic presentations, that partners can use and build on to train their personnel and countries can use in discussions with implementing partners. Conscious of the importance of building implementing partners' capacity to investigate allegations, UNHCR developed an e-learning course on sexual exploitation and abuse investigations and a resource kit<sup>16</sup> based on commonly used principles and standards for United Nations system investigations and the UNHCR investigations training programme for partners.

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

22. Efforts to widen and deepen the priority placed on victims' rights and dignity continue. UNHCR advanced operationalization of its policy on a victim-centred approach in its response to sexual misconduct.<sup>17</sup> UNICEF, supported by the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and UNFPA, led the development of technical guidance on the implementation of the United Nations

<sup>14</sup> Implementing partners are defined as national government entities (including agencies or institutions), non-governmental organizations, civil society organizations, United Nations system agencies or organizations acting as implementing partners, non-United Nations multilateral and intergovernmental entities and other entities (academia, etc.) with which United Nations system organizations enter into agreements and allocate United Nations resources to execute or implement programmes, projects and activities for the organization's beneficiaries (Joint Inspection Unit report on the review of the management of implementing partners in the United Nations system organizations (JIU/REP/2013/4), para. 3).

<sup>15</sup> Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-task-team-accountability-affected-populations-and-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/un-implementing-partner-psea-capacity-assessment>.

<sup>16</sup> Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-champion-protection-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-and-sexual-harassment/investigating-allegations-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse-toolkit-partners>.

<sup>17</sup> UNHCR, "Policy on a victim-centred approach in UNHCR's response to sexual misconduct: sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment", 2020. Available at [www.unhcr.org/5fdb345e7.pdf](http://www.unhcr.org/5fdb345e7.pdf).



protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse,<sup>18</sup> which was finalized and rolled out, with a training package, in the Democratic Republic of the Congo in late 2021. In collaboration with OHCHR, the Office of Legal Affairs and UNICEF, the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate developed a framework for a roster of pro bono lawyers and legal aid organizations able to assist victims to be piloted in 2022, while UNICEF initiated a legal aid initiative to strengthen access to victim-centred justice. WHO funded assistance provided through UNFPA to 92 victims identified by its independent commission, regardless of the affiliation of the perpetrator. Led by the Victims' Rights Advocate, a guide on the scope and duration of victim assistance is under preparation, and a methodology to garner victims' feedback is being developed. In February 2022, the High-level Steering Group endorsed the policy on integrating a human rights-based approach into United Nations efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse. The policy, the development of which was led by OHCHR, sets out the meaning of a human rights-based, victim-centred approach; clarifies the roles and responsibilities of the United Nations and its personnel and Member States; and provides concrete guidance on implementation. The Victims' Rights Advocate continued to consult on a draft statement on victims' rights to raise victims' awareness of their rights, to be finalized in 2022.

23. In my report of 2017, I observed that, if sexual harassment were present in the workplace (A/71/818 and A/71/818/Corr.1, para. 17), sexual exploitation and abuse may occur in contexts in which we serve, as these behaviours are driven by gender inequality and discrimination. I applaud the High-level Committee on Management, which in July 2021 approved core principles on advancing a common understanding of a victim-centred approach to sexual harassment within the United Nations system developed by the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System and coordinated by the Victims' Rights Advocate and representatives of the World Bank. To strengthen a system-wide understanding of the victim-centred approach, OHCHR, IOM, the secretariat of the Task Force and the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate mapped existing United Nations system training courses on sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment as a background to the preparation of a multimedia training package on the victim-centred approach for United Nations and related personnel.

24. The Victims' Rights Advocate continued advocacy on implementing my policy on elevating the voice of victims themselves and putting their rights and dignity at the forefront of our efforts. She resumed her country visits, suspended as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, visiting Kenya in November 2021. This visit, undertaken at the invitation of the Resident Coordinator, coincided with the 16 Days of Activism against Gender-based Violence campaign. To emphasize that the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse requires system-wide action, my Special Coordinator, the WHO Director for the Prevention and Response to Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment and the UNHCR Senior Coordinator on Sexual Exploitation, Abuse and Harassment participated in the visit, engaging with representatives of United Nations entities, government and civil society organizations, beneficiaries and service providers in Nairobi, Kakuma and Lodwar. They explored ways to further unite United Nations country team efforts and pilot better practices in the United Nations Office at Nairobi.

25. At the end of November 2021, full-time Senior Victims' Rights Officers were deployed in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Haiti and South Sudan. Supported by the Victims' Rights Advocate, these officers

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<sup>18</sup> United Nations, "Technical note on the implementation of the United Nations protocol on the provision of assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse", 2021. Available at <https://psea.interagencystandingcommittee.org/resources/technical-note-implementation-united-nations-protocol-provision-assistance-victims-sexual>.



demonstrate that the presence of a trusted person on the ground dedicated to championing the rights of victims makes a real difference. They coordinate urgent medical care and psychosocial support; facilitate access to legal aid, including on paternity and child support claims; and provide livelihood support for victims and their children. With United Nations entities and partners, they contributed to the development of project proposals for the trust fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse<sup>19</sup> and strengthened partnerships with local actors on the provision of legal assistance relating to paternity and child maintenance claims, birth certificates and immediate and longer-term support for victims. In the Democratic Republic of the Congo, the Senior Victims' Rights Officer received complaints through community-based networks and collaborates with UNFPA and UNICEF to facilitate medical and psychosocial support for victims through local partners. In Haiti, the Senior Victims' Rights Officer supervised a livelihood support project for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse and arranged payment of school and ancillary fees and lunches for children born of such wrongs. With IOM, she disbursed grants from the Central Emergency Response Fund to fund life-saving needs of children and their mothers, including those affected by gang violence and the earthquake in August 2021. In South Sudan, the Senior Victims' Rights Officer collaborated with the United Nations country team to strengthen the coherence of inter-agency referral mechanisms and initiate discussions on the development of an inter-agency victim assistance tracking system and developed terms of reference for victims' rights focal points to be appointed by United Nations entities in the country. With UNFPA, she developed a trust fund project to provide specialized services to victims and children born of sexual exploitation and abuse, approved in November 2021. She led discussions on addressing harmful practices, such as child marriage, that facilitate sexual exploitation and abuse and impede the realization of victims' rights.

26. I believe that we must expand the network of advocates across our peace, humanitarian and development programmes to create an enabling environment to encourage victims to come forward and provide access to quality support and services. I will encourage the establishment of Senior Victims' Rights Officer positions where they are needed. I commend the United Nations country teams and prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse networks in Guatemala and Nepal for designating victims' rights focal points with a system-wide mandate mirroring those of the Victims' Rights Advocate and the Senior Victims' Rights Officers.

27. In 2021, the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate administered a survey in the 13 countries included in its earlier mapping project<sup>20</sup> to gather information on progress in realizing the rights of victims to services. The results showed some improvement but persisting gaps. Among these is the realization of victims' rights to justice and remedies, including paternity and child maintenance claims, a priority that the Victims' Rights Advocate pursues in cooperation with the Conduct and Discipline Service of the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, Conduct and Discipline Teams and Senior Victims' Rights Officers.

28. In 2021, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance reviewed paternity claims related to all categories of peacekeeping personnel received from 1 January 2010 to 21 December 2019. I am disturbed that the review reveals that, at the end of 2019, 87 per cent of the claims were open and pending, and in 78 per cent of cases Member States had not responded when notified of a claim. Furthermore, 45 per cent of the children concerned were over 5 years old and 15 per cent were over 10 years old. Together, the United Nations and Member States must

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<sup>19</sup> See [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/trust-fund](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/trust-fund).

<sup>20</sup> See [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/mapping-assistance](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/mapping-assistance).

address our responsibilities to these and other children born of sexual exploitation and abuse to ensure that their fathers' parental obligations can be realized.

29. In June 2021, the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Department of Peace Operations convened a high-level meeting of Member States on strengthening the conduct of peacekeeping personnel through the sharing of good practices as part of my Action for Peacekeeping initiative. The meeting was focused on preventing misconduct, realizing accountability and providing support to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. One Member State reported that it gathers DNA samples from troops prior to deployment to support the resolution of paternity claims. In late 2021, the same Member State dispatched a team to a peacekeeping mission to gather DNA samples from mothers and their children to facilitate the resolution of existing claims. I applaud these advances and encourage other Member States to consider these and similar approaches during discussions on strengthening the facilitation of paternity and child support claims relating to peace operations personnel, to be convened by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance and the Victims' Right Advocate in 2022.

30. Maintaining trust between the United Nations and the populations that it serves is crucial for operational effectiveness. I encourage troop- and police-contributing countries to consider creating mechanisms to provide financial and other support to children born of sexual exploitation and abuse by their deployed personnel. I call on troop- and police-contributing countries with paternity claims pending for six months or more to take clear steps to facilitate their resolution, including by addressing substantive and procedural legal obstacles. I ask that such States work closely with the Victims' Rights Advocate to facilitate the provision of basic assistance and support, including food, schooling and medical and psychosocial care, to the mothers and children concerned.

31. As at 14 February 2022, the trust fund benefited from contributions from 24 Member States, with four new contributions received in 2021. The trust fund does not provide individual financial assistance but supports projects providing general assistance to victims. For example, six projects implemented in 2021 in the Democratic Republic of the Congo and one in Haiti were directed towards strengthening victims' capacity to sustain themselves through income-generating activities. Projects to support victims in the Central African Republic, the Democratic Republic of the Congo, Liberia and South Sudan were approved in late 2021 and early 2022.

32. I am grateful to the Member States that have contributed to the trust fund and encourage others to do so. The Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance, with the support of the Victims' Rights Advocate, will continue to explore funding possibilities and work closely with agencies, funds and programmes to prepare new projects. I also call on agencies, funds and programmes to consider how funding sources can complement trust fund resources to strengthen assistance for victims.

## **VI. No impunity**

33. I am pleased that progress has been made in streamlining investigations, substantiating claims of sexual exploitation and abuse and holding perpetrators accountable through strengthened reporting and complaint mechanisms and investigations. Steps forward have been made in integrating a victim-sensitive approach into investigations. For example, the Investigations Division of the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS) has dedicated personnel trained to conduct investigations into sexual misconduct, including when perpetrated against young persons and women. Similar expertise is available in other parts of the system. OIOS

pioneered good practices, such as including Senior Victims' Rights Officers in their investigations to support victims.

34. OIOS worked closely with the Department of Peace Operations and OHCHR to develop a "train-the-trainer" programme to strengthen Member States' capacity to investigate complaints implicating its deployed personnel. The training is focused on sexual exploitation and abuse allegations with an emphasis on a victim-centred approach and the standards of conduct expected of United Nations personnel. OIOS, with the Department, plans to deliver four training sessions in 2022.

35. Investigation services strengthened their approach to sexual exploitation and abuse investigations system-wide. Close attention is paid to credibility assessments of witness testimony as part of the investigative fact-finding. Investigations are guided by: (a) consideration of consent for the use of personally identifiable information; (b) avoidance of multiple interviews that may retraumatize victims; (c) provision of adequate information on support mechanisms, safety and security and adequate communication on the investigation and its progression; and (d) ensuring confidentiality to protect privacy and avoid stigma.

36. Sexual misconduct cases are prioritized to accelerate the completion of the investigation. OIOS, UNICEF, UNHCR and WHO increased the number of investigators with specialized expertise to support management of timeliness in investigations. UNHCR established an investigative field presence in five locations. To enhance child forensic interviewing skills, UNHCR and OIOS investigators attended training on child forensic interviewing skills, and UNICEF and OIOS trained individuals in the Democratic Republic of the Congo to support children during investigations. Yet challenges remain: stigma may constrain reporting, evidence may be destroyed or otherwise be unavailable and accountability systems may prove difficult to access for victims, in particular in remote areas.

37. To address some of the challenges, an electronic version of an incident reporting form will be rolled out in 2022 for use at the intake of the initial report of sexual exploitation and abuse. The form will be an important accountability tool, allowing investigation services to respond quickly and effectively to reports of sexual exploitation and abuse by documenting the nature of the complaint and, to the extent possible, recording the identity of the victim, alleged offender and witnesses. I am confident that its wider use will improve consistency in the collection and exchange of information on allegations within the United Nations system, with scrupulous regard for data protection principles. The number of times a victim or witness will be interviewed by United Nations personnel will be reduced, minimizing trauma. This will standardize and bring rigour to the complaint intake process, ensure that the initial complaint is reviewed and assessed by the appropriate investigative body and protect data system-wide through an access-only platform for confidential information-sharing within the United Nations system.

## **VII. Facilitating accountability at the national level**

38. All acts of sexual exploitation and abuse, irrespective of whether they meet the definition of crimes at the national level, violate the standards of conduct of the United Nations. The Organization, as an employer, uses its administrative and disciplinary mechanisms to sanction personnel who engage in sexual exploitation and abuse. All final determinations by the Organization that a staff member has perpetrated sexual exploitation and abuse as defined in my bulletin on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse ([ST/SGB/2003/13](#)) result in the perpetrating staff member being dismissed or separated from service and

included in Clear Check. As of June 2018, any hiring decision across the United Nations must be run against this database. I will examine expanding its use.

39. Where acts of sexual exploitation or sexual abuse may amount to crimes, the role of the United Nations is to refer credible allegations of which it becomes aware to Member States as a priority and, irrespective of whether they were initially referred by the United Nations, cooperate with national investigations and prosecutions to facilitate the proper administration of justice. This 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.

40. Between 1 July 2016 and 30 June 2021, 24 credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse against United Nations officials and experts on mission were referred to their States of nationality. In all cases, the United Nations provided cooperation when requested. I also provide information received from Member States on the status of investigations and prosecutions in referral and cooperation cases in my annual report on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission.<sup>21</sup>

41. I continue to urge Member States to ensure that United Nations personnel who may have engaged in any form of criminal conduct, including in relation to sexual exploitation and abuse, are held accountable, and reiterate that the Organization will cooperate with national authorities in this regard. I also call on Member States to inform the United Nations of the outcome of cases referred, as urged by the General Assembly (see resolution [76/106](#)).

42. Information on allegations concerning members of national military contingents in United Nations peace operations is available on the United Nations website.<sup>22</sup> Troop-contributing countries retain the authority to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse implicating their personnel, although investigations with the support of OIOS are strongly encouraged. Member States have improved their engagement with OIOS to ensure more rapid investigations and follow-up. I look forward to more progress. Accountability for sexual exploitation and abuse in cases involving uniformed personnel depends on national laws and procedures, including criminal codes where applicable, that apply to these acts and conduct.

43. I recall my request to Member States, first made in 2015 (see [A/69/779](#) and [A/70/729](#)), to prohibit sexual exploitation and abuse, as defined by the United Nations, by deployed personnel and enact legislation that specifically prohibits such acts by those personnel, with sanctions commensurate with the gravity of the acts. I ask all troop- and police-contributing countries to include by 31 December 2023 this expectation of conduct in their administrative rules, regulations and codes applying to personnel deployed to peacekeeping and special political missions, as an enabling criterion for deployment to those missions.

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<sup>21</sup> Annex I to the report of the Secretary-General on the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission ([A/76/208](#)) 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 to that report contains information concerning cases in which Member States have informed the United Nations of investigations in the past five years.

<sup>22</sup> 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, which are subject to the exclusive criminal jurisdiction of the States contributing such personnel.

44. Accountability to victims and communities requires timely investigations, which support the possibility of gathering sufficient evidence to substantiate allegations. Following consultation with the Member State concerned, I will consider suspending further deployments and/or extensions of existing deployments pending notification of the completion of investigations where they have not been completed within a reasonable period following notification to the Member State.

45. All allegations against non-United Nations forces operating under a Security Council mandate are referred by OHCHR to the Member State or security force concerned. OHCHR follows up on such allegations, encouraging the initiation of investigations leading to accountability processes and remedies for victims. It provides information, offers technical advice and facilitates contact with victims and witnesses in line with the human rights principles of safety, confidentiality and informed consent. The response from Member States is uneven. In facilitating contacts with victims for possible participation in national accountability proceedings, OHCHR has found that there is a lack of information about practical aspects of proceedings and measures to protect and assist victims. OHCHR seeks to engage with the States concerned for clarification and to communicate this to victims. Some States have conducted investigations, but OHCHR is unaware of national proceedings leading to sanctions against perpetrators.

## VIII. Engagement with Member States and civil society

46. My senior staff and I engage with Member States, intergovernmental organizations, civil society, international and national experts and national and local leaders to glean best practices to improve our response. I am pleased that many of our policies and practices have been adopted by other organizations. In 2020 and 2021, the Office of the Special Coordinator initiated an informal inventory of publicly available information regarding the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse policies and standards of 193 international and regional NGOs and compared them against the United Nations framework of initiatives on prevention, victim-centred approaches, enforcement, accountability and external engagement. The findings indicate that many organizations model themselves on United Nations policies and standards (such as [ST/SGB/2003/13](#)). In 2022, the Office of the Special Coordinator will engage with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, United Nations entities and civil society to identify areas for greater collaboration.

47. I am committed to strengthening cooperation with regional and other international organizations, including to align minimum standards on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. At the request of the African Union, OHCHR and the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance provided information, experience and practices on documenting and managing allegations and advice on the development of policy frameworks and mechanisms.

48. In 2021, the Special Coordinator and other senior United Nations leaders participated in the Development Assistance Committee high-level round table of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development on its recommendation on ending sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in development cooperation and humanitarian assistance.<sup>23</sup> I am pleased that UNHCR and UNICEF adhered to this recommendation and that United Nations entities are members of the Committee's reference group on ending sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment.

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<sup>23</sup> See [www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-recommendation-on-ending-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.htm](http://www.oecd.org/dac/gender-development/dac-recommendation-on-ending-sexual-exploitation-abuse-and-harassment.htm).

49. In September 2021,<sup>24</sup> I renewed my invitation to Heads of State or Government to join my circle of leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations<sup>25</sup> as a demonstration of political solidarity for this agenda, and I am pleased to report that 100 are participating. I welcome two further signatories to the voluntary compact on preventing and addressing sexual exploitation and abuse, bringing the total to 105 Member States.

50. Where civil society is concerned, the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate and the Global Alliance of National Human Rights Institutions produced a guide for national human rights institutions on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. They also organized a virtual event on the margins of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly on strengthening United Nations partnerships with national human rights institutions to implement a victim-centred approach to tackling sexual exploitation and abuse. The Office of the Special Coordinator and the Victims' Rights Advocate participated in consultations led by the Fédération Internationale de Football Association on the establishment of an independent, international entity to support the management of cases of sexual abuse in sport through a victim-centred approach.

## IX. Communications

51. To strengthen transparency, I communicate allegations received by the United Nations involving its staff and affiliated personnel or the personnel of United Nations implementing partners where there is sufficient information to identify an act of sexual exploitation and abuse against an identifiable perpetrator or identifiable victim on the United Nations website in close to real time.<sup>26</sup>

52. Information on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to peacekeeping is available on the Conduct in United Nations Field Missions web page.<sup>27</sup> In 2023, information on progress on paternity and child support claims will be included.

53. A dedicated multimedia good practices page<sup>28</sup> was launched on the Conduct in United Nations Field Missions web page. A portal to allow Member States to exchange and discuss good practices bilaterally is under development.

54. The Secretariat's training courses on communicating on sexual exploitation and abuse for senior officials and experts across the system continue, and peace operations and other field entities have stepped up awareness-raising. Together with UNFPA, the Department of Global Communications chaired an inter-agency task force that finalized system-wide guidance on communicating on sexual exploitation and abuse introduced to the High-level Steering Group in December 2021.

55. UNHCR and the International Council of Voluntary Agencies continued to strengthen community engagement and awareness through the community outreach and communications fund, disbursing grants to 19 local NGOs in 2020 and 15 in 2021. UNFPA reached 1.3 million people through an advocacy campaign in 35 Inter-Agency Standing Committee priority countries with an ongoing humanitarian response through over 17,000 community conversations on victims' rights, reporting channels and assistance.

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<sup>24</sup> United Nations, "Statement of the Secretary-General on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse: putting victims' rights and dignity at the forefront", press release, 18 September 2021.

<sup>25</sup> See [www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/circle-leadership](http://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/content/circle-leadership).

<sup>26</sup> See [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).

<sup>27</sup> See <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.

<sup>28</sup> See <https://conduct.unmissions.org/good-practices-conduct-and-discipline>.



56. Internal awareness was raised through regular discussions convened by the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, the Office of the Special Coordinator, the Development Coordination Office and OHCHR with resident coordinators' offices, protection from sexual exploitation and abuse coordinators, gender focal points, child protection advisers and heads of human rights field presences to encourage the implementation of my strategy, with an emphasis on the victims' rights approach. Building on Inter-Agency Standing Committee Champions initiatives<sup>29</sup> to empower United Nations personnel to recognize sexual misconduct and speak up, the Office of the Special Coordinator mapped 88 bystander intervention projects worldwide. Findings indicate that there is a gap in sexual exploitation and abuse bystander initiatives. The Office of the Special Coordinator is consulting internally and externally with a view to developing bystander materials in this context for United Nations personnel.

## X. Overview of data on allegations

57. The data and special measures presented in the present report relate to sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping and special political missions and humanitarian and other operational contexts pursuant to General Assembly resolution 57/306 of 15 April 2003. Sexual exploitation and abuse implicating United Nations personnel serving elsewhere are not reflected in the present report (see A/76/602) but such acts constitute violations of United Nations regulations and rules (see ST/SGB/2018/1, staff rule 1.2 (e)), for which personnel will be held accountable through the Organization's disciplinary and criminal accountability referral frameworks.

58. In 2021, 194 allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to United Nations staff and affiliated personnel were received across the United Nations system, and 251 allegations relating to personnel of implementing partners not under the authority of the United Nations were reported.

### A. Peacekeeping and special political missions

59. A total of 75 allegations were reported in peacekeeping and special political missions in 2021, an increase from the 66 allegations reported in 2020 and above the average of 69 reported annually in the previous 10 years.<sup>30</sup>

60. Some 190 identified victims were associated with these allegations; 68 victims were associated with 66 allegations reported in 2020 and 99 were associated with 80 allegations reported in 2019. Most of the allegations involving multiple victims related to MINUSCA, with several involving one troop-contributing country whose troops were repatriated in September 2021, and other allegations related to events from prior years involving personnel from another troop-contributing country no longer serving in United Nations peacekeeping missions.

61. There was an increase in the proportion of all allegations made in 2021 involving sexual abuse of a child, with 25 allegations relating to 51 children. A total of 5 allegations in 2021 related to the sexual abuse of adult victims and 45 allegations

<sup>29</sup> UNHCR, "United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Filippo Grandi's IASC championship on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment", 2021, available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/system/files/2021-07/Filippo%20Grandi-IASC%20Championship%20on%20Protection%20From%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20and%20Sexual%20Harassment%2C%20Sep%202019-Dec%202020.pdf>; and UNHCR, "A selection of promising practices on organizational culture change", 2021, available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/iasc-promising-practices-organizational-culture-change-may-2021>.

<sup>30</sup> Further information on allegations, including the status of allegations recorded since 2015, is available at <https://conduct.unmissions.org/sea-data-introduction>.

involved the sexual exploitation of adult victims.<sup>31</sup> There were 75 paternity claims associated with the allegations in 2021.

62. Almost 90 per cent of the allegations in 2021 related to two missions, with 42 allegations concerning MINUSCA and 24 concerning the United Nations Organization Stabilization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo. This is an increase from 2020 in the number of allegations related to each mission. Compared with 2020, there was an overall decrease in the number of allegations related to other missions, with eight allegations being recorded in four peacekeeping missions (United Nations Mission in South Sudan (4); United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in Mali (2); and the former United Nations Stabilization Mission in Haiti (2)), and one allegation at the United Nations Verification Mission in Colombia, a special political mission.

63. There were 25 allegations reported in 2021 related to events occurring in 2021; the 50 other allegations related to events occurring in 2020 or earlier.<sup>32</sup> Victims may delay reporting allegations for several years, including because they were unaware of the United Nations standards of conduct and ways to report. Outreach efforts encourage reporting, including months or years after the events. Although investigations may be more difficult, the United Nations refers such allegations for investigation and assists victims.

64. The overall increase in the number of allegations reported in 2021, when compared with allegations in 2020, corresponds to an increase, from 41 to 52, in the number of allegations involving military personnel (an average of 40 allegations per year over the previous 10 years) and a small increase, from 7 to 9, in the number of allegations involving police or other government-provided personnel (an average of 9 allegations per year for the previous 10 years). There was a decrease, from 18 to 14, in the number of allegations involving civilian personnel (an average of close to 20 allegations per year over the previous 10 years). The number of alleged perpetrators (162) increased in 2021, the average per year over the previous 10 years being 115.<sup>33</sup>

65. Apart from four allegations reported in late 2020 in respect of which investigations by OIOS are ongoing, investigations conducted by the United Nations into allegations received in 2020 or earlier have been completed. Information is awaited on investigations conducted by 21 Member States relating to 117 allegations received in 2020 or earlier, comprising 40 allegations for which no information has been received and 77 allegations for which the information received is incomplete.<sup>34</sup> This is an increase from the 78 allegations from 2019 or earlier for which information was pending, as referred to in my previous report ([A/75/754](#)).

66. Seven cases of substantiated allegations involving Secretariat staff members, initially recorded in 2020 and 2019, are being considered by the Department of Management Strategy, Policy and Compliance for disciplinary action, as the related investigations were completed in 2021 or 2020. Information from 23 Member States on accountability measures taken in 55 substantiated allegations involving police and military personnel is outstanding in respect of allegations recorded in 2020 or earlier.<sup>35</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Supplementary information, sect. VI.A.

<sup>32</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. VI.B.

<sup>33</sup> The numbers of associated perpetrators in two allegations reported for the United Nations Multidimensional Integrated Stabilization Mission in the Central African Republic are still to be determined.

<sup>34</sup> Supplementary information, sect. VI.C.

<sup>35</sup> *Ibid.*, sect. VI.D.

67. As at 31 December 2021, of the 305 individual paternity and child support claims associated with allegations received since 2010, 273 had yet to be resolved and require action by 32 Member States.<sup>36</sup>

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

68. In 2021, 115 allegations relating to personnel of agencies, funds and programmes were reported, compared with 109 in 2020.<sup>37</sup> Of these, 26 related to 2021 and 22 to previous years, with the date of 67 reported as unknown. Regarding the status of the allegations, 12 have been substantiated, 15 were unsubstantiated, 31 are under investigation, 24 are under assessment and 33 are closed owing to a lack of evidence and/or separation of the alleged perpetrators from the entity at their own or the entity's initiative on grounds of other misconduct. Of the 109 allegations reported in 2020, 18 remain under investigation, 18 were substantiated, 18 were unsubstantiated, 5 are under assessment and 50 are closed.

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

69. In 2021, 251 allegations relating to personnel of implementing partners not under the authority of the United Nations were reported, compared with 244 in 2020. There was a significant increase in allegations of sexual exploitation, from 59 in 2020 to 94 in 2021.

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

70. In 2021, OHCHR received four allegations of sexual exploitation and/or abuse against members of non-United Nations forces operating under a Security Council mandate formerly deployed in the Central African Republic. All the victims are female, including one child. The alleged perpetrators are all male. The allegations also involve paternity claims. All the allegations were found to be substantiated by OHCHR investigations. OHCHR referred victims for assistance, informed the Member States concerned and requested investigations. OHCHR follows up with Member States advocating for processes leading to redress for victims and accountability for perpetrators. In most cases, allegations concern members of forces no longer deployed and relate to events alleged to have occurred a few years ago, making investigations difficult.

71. I encourage Member States to engage proactively with OHCHR on these allegations, conduct timely and independent investigations and facilitate victims' access to justice and redress.

## **XI. Resourcing our efforts**

72. The present report shows the progress made over the past year to strengthen the Organization's response to sexual exploitation and abuse. I am mindful of the need for the careful stewardship of resources to take this forward and am grateful to the Member States that have funded the Office of the Special Coordinator through

<sup>36</sup> Ibid., sect. VI.E.

<sup>37</sup> In addition to the 95 allegations indicated in my previous report (A/75/754), 14 were recorded for 2020, as acts of sexual exploitation and abuse were uncovered during investigations completed in 2021.

extrabudgetary resources and have contributed to the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate, the trust fund and other programmatic activities.

73. I intend to bolster prevention of these acts through a more aggressive approach. In recognition of the need for constant high-level vigilance combined with the ability to initiate timely action, I will appoint a full-time dedicated Under-Secretary-General to carry out the role of Special Coordinator to ensure dedicated support to the United Nations system-wide.

74. I encourage the Special Coordinator to explore the integration of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse as a requirement in all United Nations activities and programmes. This will embed a shared appreciation of the risk of this behaviour, including through common training and communications, and foster timely information-sharing across the system. It will facilitate the leveraging and sharing of resources and capacities among United Nations entities, in particular in duty stations at the country level.

75. I will entrust the Special Coordinator and the Under-Secretary-General for Safety and Security to work with the appropriate entities so that the protection of sexual exploitation and abuse is addressed in the security analyses of environments in which the United Nations operates.

## **XII. Conclusions**

76. Five years ago, I committed to a strategy to “change the game” when it came to combating sexual exploitation and abuse. I acknowledge that the Organization has not succeeded in all respects, but neither have we stood still nor let down our guard.

77. Just as we all have become too painfully aware of our responsibility to be cognizant of stewardship of the environment, we have become more attentive to the persistent gender imbalances with associated power asymmetries that lead to systematic unwelcome sexual behaviour. The present report shows how the United Nations is addressing these challenges broadly. We know that more must be done to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse and we are committed to doing what is needed.

78. In the face of persistent and widespread sexual exploitation and abuse it is easy to become discouraged. Yet we must persevere in our efforts to address these wrongs that exist in every society and at every level. I recognize and thank the many women and men who have worked, and continue to work, tirelessly on this issue.

79. I promised five years ago that we would put our heads down and march forward to make progress in improving the way in which this Organization deals with sexual exploitation and abuse. We will continue to move forward and press on.

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