



BANGLADESH

Sixth Committee of the 73rd Session of the UN General Assembly

Agenda Item 79: Criminal Accountability of UN Officials and Experts on Mission

Date and venue: Friday, 05 October 2018 at Trusteeship Council Chamber

Mr./ Madam Chair,

Under this agenda item, Bangladesh aligns itself with the statement delivered by the Islamic Republic of Iran on behalf of the Non-Aligned Movement (NAM).

We thank the Secretary General for his analytical reports concerning criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on missions, pursuant to Resolution 72/112. We have referred the reports to our concerned national authorities for further guidance on our own situation update, and for information on good practices from other comparable contexts. Bangladesh looks forward to sharing further information on its existing legal and administrative provisions pertaining to extra-territorial jurisdiction for criminal accountability of its nationals deployed as UN officials and experts on missions. We hope to benefit from further deliberations in the Working Group on Criminal Accountability under this Committee. We, however, underscore the need for further careful consideration with regard to commencing work on an international legal instrument at this stage.

We find it useful to have a snapshot of the policies and procedures guiding criminal accountability in various UN entities, and to see large degree of coordination and coherence across such entities in terms of reporting, investigation, referral and follow-up on credible allegations with the concerned national authorities. Bangladesh will remain available to constructively address any practical challenges in this regard through informed consultations at the relevant legislative bodies, including those for the specialized agencies and related organizations. We would, however, advise against differentiated treatments across various legislative bodies, irrespective of the dynamics of Member States' engagement in such bodies.

The overriding importance of leadership responsibility and accountability need not be overemphasized. It is crucial that there are clear, standard procedures for incident reporting, without fear of reprisal or retaliation and with adequate safeguards for whistle-blowers. Regular training and strategic communication involving staff members have proved to be effective in terms of prevention, and should be carried out with diligence.

Mr./ Madam Chair,

We feel encouraged to see that the Secretary General's desired cultural and operational changes for a system-wide response against sexual exploitation and abuse are bearing results supported by evidence. There has been broad-based support for his new approach strategy that aims at taking a holistic perspective involving all UN civilian and uniformed personnel as well as non-UN forces. The concrete initiatives taken with regard to pre-deployment training, attestation and screening, risk mitigation and accountability appear to be steps in the right direction. Bangladesh thanks the UN Country Team for its attention to accelerated training of staff prior to deployment for managing the Rohingya humanitarian crisis in Cox's Bazar. We have recently signed a Framework of Cooperation with the Office of the Special Representative on Sexual Violence in Conflicts for undertaking further preventive measures in this regard.

The UN's 'zero tolerance' policy on sexual exploitation and abuse must be translated into a 'zero case' scenario. The recurrence of allegations from different mission settings makes it obvious that there is no room for complacency. Bangladesh appreciates the work done by the Office of the Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse. We encourage continued efforts towards making the data, information and reports on credible allegations transparent, accessible and standardized for the convenience of all concerned. The repository developed through the system-wide website is a useful tool. It is crucial that objective and updated information is furnished with regard to follow-up on credible allegations referred to Member States or other entities. In parallel with specific measures, added attention should be given to addressing the root causes of sexual exploitation and abuse in complex and high-risk mission settings.

We reaffirm the centrality of the rights and protection of victims, and welcome the Secretary General's appointment of Victim Rights Advocate in this connection. We see

merit in having a clear delineation of her role and function in order to avoid duplication of efforts with the Special Coordinator. The Secretary General's Victim Support Fund has the potential to make a difference in the lives of those affected, and should continue to be supported. Bangladesh has already released USD 100,000 that our Government had committed for the Fund last year. Our Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina reaffirmed her commitment as part of the Secretary General's Circle of Leadership and endorsed its Collective Statement issued on the margins of the General Debate last week.

Bangladesh is currently in the process of settling financial responsibility for victim and child support against a sustained allegation of sexual abuse and paternity claim involving one of its peacekeepers deployed in MONUSCO in 2015. The concerned offender is liable to face appropriate judicial and disciplinary measures as per relevant laws and regulations. As in this particular instance, our authorities stand ready to work with the UN to conduct joint investigations in case of allegations against any of our nationals. It is reprehensible for any peacekeeper to betray the trust of those he or she is mandated serve and protect. The action of a few aberrant individuals should not however give grounds for collective punishment against a troop or a contingent.

Mr./ Madam Chair,

All UN officials and experts deployed in missions bear the solemn responsibility to uphold the Charter principles and thus the image, credibility and integrity of the organization itself. Any allegation of wrongdoing leveled against these individuals should be duly investigated with the outcomes shared in a transparent manner in order to send a strong message against impunity. This remains critical for enhancing and sustaining trust in the UN by Member States and other relevant stakeholders. It also applies for non-UN forces deployed in missions with UN endorsement, as they are also expected to uphold the UN values and principles in their conduct.

I thank you.