

Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme
First session of 2023 Nairobi, 28–29 March 2023

Item 9

Annual report on action by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual and any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace

<https://unhabitat.org/sites/default/files/2023/02/2300584e.pdf>

Chair, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am speaking on behalf of, Canada, Brazil, Costa Rica, France, Germany, Japan, Mexico, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Turkiye and the United States of America. The statement is also supported by Belgium, Czech Republic, Colombia, the European Union, Finland, the Kingdom of the Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Switzerland and the United Kingdom.

Allow me to thank the secretariat for preparing document HSP/EB.2023/5 *Action by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual and any other type of exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment in the workplace*, including the letter of the Executive Director to certify that UN-Habitat has reported to the Secretary-General all allegations brought to its attention and has taken all appropriate measures to address such allegations.

We reiterate the importance of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment, as well as for inaction in response to sexual exploitation, abuse and sexual harassment. We are all, together, as UN Member States, employees and implementing partners responsible for actively creating safe, respectful and trustworthy workplace cultures and operational contexts.

We would like to take this opportunity to initiate discussion on how progress on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment (PSEA and SH) is measured. **To measure is to know.**

There is a great deal more that we need to know and learn, to ensure that all employees, implementing partners and beneficiaries of the UN system are adequately protected against sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment. And further, that they can count on a system that puts victims and survivors at the heart of its approach, ensuring justice for those affected and accountability for perpetrators.

We appreciate the information provided in the document for this agenda item and in previous Executive Board meetings. Allow me to raise a few points and questions that we feel need to be further addressed.

First, acknowledging that efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment prevention can be difficult to measure, we should focus on **results** and impact, beyond quantitative data on activities and outputs. Can the secretariat clarify how accountability and cultural change in UN Habitat is measured and how a survivor centered approach is operationalized? What systems and action plans are in place and how are they delivering on results? We acknowledge this is a complex and multifaceted issue, which is

exactly why we believe it is a topic to be tackled jointly, at all levels and with combined efforts.

Second and related: the importance of **cooperation** cannot be overstated. Sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment are not unique to any single UN agency, and therefore the UN's response must be well-coordinated and system-wide in order to be effective. Alignment of metrics, indicators and reporting on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment across the UN system is therefore of utmost importance. Does UN-Habitat make use of UN system-wide tools and mechanisms, including working with the UN Special Coordinator and Victims' Rights Advocate? This would improve comparability of data across entities, particularly at the country level. How is inter-agency collaboration, sharing and system-wide learning encouraged, measured and institutionalized? Are disaggregated data collected in a manner that allows for analysis and use across the system?

Third, we raise the point of **learning** and ensuring effective feedback loops are in place. Data can only ever be useful if we use it to draw lessons and inform decisions, with the aim of continuously improving. Could you elaborate on how data obtained, and lessons learned, feed back into decision making and updated strategies at country, regional and headquarter offices, including feedback loops between them? Furthermore, how does UN Habitat take into account the experiences of survivors to ensure adequate support to them?

Fourth, we raise the point of **accountability** to build an organizational culture of zero tolerance. In that regard we want to reiterate the importance of creating a speak-up culture, free from fear of retaliation, including to apply sanctions for established misconduct. How will UN-Habitat track progress made regarding the strengthening of mechanisms to hold perpetrators accountable? And how does UN Habitat assess its ability to provide effective follow-up of survivor-centered support in substantiated cases?

Fifth, We welcome UN Habitat's reaffirmation to its Agreements of Cooperation with implementing partners to incorporate conditions relating to sexual exploitation and abuse and commend its commitment towards ensuring that implementing partners undergo training for the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. Could the Secretariat clarify if sexual harassment is equitably addressed under these agreements and training? And could you also elaborate on interagency efforts to share information on experiences with implementing partners?

We appreciate your responses and will submit our full statement in writing as well for more detailed answers. Thank you!