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**Action by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual
or any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual
harassment in the workplace**

Action by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme to strengthen protection against sexual and any other type of exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace**

Report of the Executive Director

1. In paragraph 4 (e) of decision 2019/4, the Executive Board decided to consider, at its first session each year, an annual report on actions taken by the United Nations Human Settlements Programme (UN-Habitat) to strengthen protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as any other kind of exploitation or abuse.
2. Recognizing the importance of transparency and accountability in the United Nations system with respect to combating sexual exploitation and abuse, since January 2018, the Secretary-General has requested members of the United Nations System Chief Executives Board for Coordination to certify annually to their governing bodies, through a management letter, that they have: (a) fully and accurately reported all credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to United Nations staff and affiliated personnel serving in their organization; and (b) made training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse available to their staff and affiliated personnel. The Secretary-General has further requested that heads of entities provide information on how their organization ensures that its implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.
3. Accordingly, the management letter from the Executive Director covering the period from 1 January to 31 December 2024 is set out in the annex to the present report for consideration by the Executive Board at its first session of 2024. The management letter has also been shared with the Secretary-General.
4. In accordance with the priorities of the Secretary-General, the management letter certifies that UN-Habitat has acted on and fully and accurately reported all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to UN-Habitat staff and affiliated personnel serving in the organization, made training on the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse available to UN-Habitat staff and affiliated personnel,

* HSP/EB.2025/1.

** The present document has not been formally edited.

and taken all necessary actions aimed at strengthening protection from and reporting of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse.

5. As part of its efforts to strengthen protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, and against sexual harassment in the workplace, as well as any other kind of exploitation or abuse, UN-Habitat has done the following:

(a) Put in place proactive follow-up mechanisms and processes to ensure that every reported victim has received – with their consent – assistance and support, in a manner consistent with the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel;

(b) Ensured accountability through prompt reporting, timely and victim-centred assessment, and investigation of all allegations that it has received, as part of its commitment to ending impunity. Where an allegation has been substantiated, UN-Habitat has ensured that the matter has been addressed consistently and in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and administrative issuances;

(c) Appointed focal points on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at UN-Habitat headquarters and Regional Office and conducted awareness-raising activities, on a proactive basis, for its staff members and related personnel regarding the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse and ways of reporting allegations of such acts. At the time of drafting the present report, 83 per cent of UN-Habitat staff members and related personnel had completed induction or refresher training on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and had been reminded of their individual obligation to report any such incidents;

(d) Communicated and advocated actively and continuously on issues relating to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, engaged in outreach efforts to raise awareness of measures of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and implemented effective ways of reporting allegations of such acts;

(e) Reinforced its efforts to manage risks related to sexual exploitation and abuse when establishing funded partnerships. Currently, UN-Habitat in its various legal instruments, requiring urging its civil society organization partners and other implementing partners to implement minimum standards and adopt policies to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse as well as assessing them on their capacity to do so;

(f) Reaffirmed that all its implementing partner agreements incorporate conditions relating to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, thereby obligating implementing partners to take all appropriate measures relating to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment committed by any of its employees or any other persons who may be engaged by the implementing partner to perform services under the respective implementing partner agreements;

(g) Completed the annual action plan to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and conducted appropriate risk assessments for each of its operations and programmes, acted upon the results of those risk assessments and continued to review those results on an ongoing basis;

(h) Committed to implementing its zero-tolerance policy on sexual exploitation and abuse, in particular by treating every allegation seriously and pursuing appropriate action. UN-Habitat has continuously sensitized its personnel on matters relating to sexual exploitation and abuse through internal broadcasts and reporting of cases received through a secure online tracker;

(i) Re-shared, through internal broadcasts, the United Nations victim statement, entitled “Your rights”, as a reminder to staff members and related personnel of the rights of victims and survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations staff members, including UN-Habitat staff and related personnel;

6. To further strengthen its efforts on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment, as well as any other kind of exploitation and abuse, UN-Habitat plans to implement the following actions in 2024:

(a) Increase awareness-raising through the use of banners and other promotional materials, as displayed at the last sessions of 2023 and 2024 of the Executive Board. UN-Habitat plans to use and disseminate these materials in outposted offices and during flagship events, such as the World Urban Forum, World Cities Day and World Habitat Day;

(b) Provide additional training on protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, including through specific training packages, for UN-Habitat staff and related personnel in outposted offices;

(c) Enhance participation, through UN-Habitat focal points, in the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. UN-Habitat actively participates in the activities of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee. It is currently participating in the Inter-Agency referral in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee victim/survivor centred approach to undertake bilateral online consultations with coordinators on prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse in Afghanistan, India, Palestine and Myanmar to strengthen existing standard operating procedures on Inter-Agency Standing Committee referrals in line with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee victim/survivor centred approach definition and principles;

(d) Conduct surveys on a regular basis and increase the participation of personnel, in particular those in outposted offices, in the annual survey on sexual exploitation and abuse;

(e) Enhance reporting on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. In the absence of a dedicated staff member, and with existing focal points performing two or three functions, reporting on the matter is very limited. UN-Habitat welcomes soft-earmarked support and stands ready to work with Member States to translate the action plan for the year 2025 into more solid measures;

(f) Continue to inform UN-Habitat staff and related personnel of the protection against retaliation policy so as to enable and empower them to report incidents of prohibited conduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse.

7. In addition to its efforts to combat sexual exploitation and abuse, UN-Habitat reaffirms its commitment to zero tolerance for any act of harassment, including sexual harassment, discrimination or abuse of authority, and is wholly and firmly committed to ensuring that all staff are aware of the policies currently in place – such as the Secretary-General’s bulletin on addressing discrimination, harassment, including sexual harassment, and abuse of authority (ST/SGB/2019/8); and on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse (ST/SGB/2003/13) – as well as the actions to be taken in respect thereof.

8. In 2024, there was no reported allegation of sexual exploitation and abuse.

9. The report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly, at its seventy-ninth session, on investigations into sexual exploitation and related offences in 2024 including data on relevant allegations received in the preceding calendar year, will be made available online once published. The report of the Secretary-General on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/78/774) prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/278, 71/297, 72/312, 73/302, 75/321, 76/274 and 77/333, contains updated information on measures taken by the United Nations to strengthen the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Annex

End-of-year management letter on protection from and reporting of allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse



UNITED NATIONS HUMAN SETTLEMENTS PROGRAMME
 Programme des Nations Unies pour les établissements humains
 Programa de las Naciones Unidas para los Asentamientos Humanos

OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

End-of-Year Management Letter on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Reporting of SEA Allegations

In accordance with Section 4.6 of the Secretary-General’s Bulletin on “Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” (ST/SGB/2003/13), and with directive of the Executive Board of the United Nations Human Settlements Programme, (“UN-Habitat”), paragraph (b)[7] of Decision 2024/1, adopted by the Executive Board of UN-Habitat during its first session for the year 2024 from 6 – 8 May 2024, and as contained in document HSP/EB/2024/13, , I, Anacláudia Rossbach, Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN-Habitat, hereby certify that UN-Habitat has reported to the Secretary-General all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) that have been brought to its attention and has taken all appropriate measures to address such allegations, in accordance with established rules and procedures for dealing with cases of misconduct.

Furthermore, in line with the Secretary General’s priorities, I certify that UN-Habitat has:

- i) placed the rights and dignity of victims at the centre and properly sought to address their needs by proactively following up to ensure that every reported victim – with their consent – has received assistance and support, [in a manner consistent with the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel;
- ii) been resolute on ending impunity, by ensuring accountability through prompt reporting, timely and victim-centred assessment and investigation of all allegations it received¹, and that where an allegation is substantiated, the matter has been addressed consistently in accordance with UN-Habitat’s staff rules, regulations and administrative issuances;
- iii) appointed PSEA focal points at UN-Habitat headquarters and in its respective Regional Offices and has been proactive in conducting awareness raising activities for its staff members and related personnel, regarding the prohibition of SEA and ways of reporting such acts. This year 83% of its staff members and related personnel,² have completed induction or refresher training on protection from

¹ All allegations that came to our attention were properly assessed, however not all result in a full investigation.

² For the purpose of this letter, the term “United Nations staff and related personnel” includes United Nations staff members, individual consultants/contractors, interns, United Nations Volunteers and affiliated personnel.



sexual exploitation and abuse (PSEA) and were reminded of their individual obligation to report any incidents of SEA; and

- iv) actively and continuously communicated and advocated on issues relating to PSEA, engaged in/joined outreach efforts to raise awareness about PSEA among the communities we serve, and implemented effective ways of reporting such allegations of SEA.

Furthermore, UN-Habitat has actively engaged with Member States, civil society and/or other partners on PSEA and pursued all appropriate means to ensure the effective protection of populations against sexual exploitation and abuse.

In addition, UN-Habitat has reinforced its efforts to manage risks of sexual exploitation and abuse when establishing funded partnerships.

UN-Habitat ensured that its civil society organization partners³ were assessed on their capacity to prevent and respond to SEA. Based on the assessment, partners received capacity strengthening support as required to ensure PSEA systems are in place.

UN-Habitat has also completed the annual Action Plan for measures undertaken to prevent and respond to SEA and conducted appropriate risk assessments for each of its operations and programmes, has acted upon the results, and continues to review these on an ongoing basis.

UN-Habitat is committed to zero tolerance to sexual exploitation and abuse, to treating every allegation seriously and pursuing appropriate action. Therefore, UN-Habitat continuously and, actively, collaborates with the Inter-Agency Standing Committee, (IASC), to support systematic planning, implementation, and progress tracking on SEA and SH. These efforts include strengthening internal mechanisms, enhancing personnel training and ensuring a victim-centered approach in addressing SEA and SH to effectively prevent and respond to SEA/SH incidents to foster a culture of accountability and respect.

UN-Habitat is further committed to not partner with any implementing partner that fails to appropriately address SEA and SH. Therefore, UN-Habitat reaffirms that all its Implementing Partner Agreements incorporate conditions relating to SEA and SH which obligates implementing partners to take all reasonable steps to prevent SEA and SH by any of its personnel or any other persons or entity acting as a representative of the implementing partner and to respond appropriately when reports of SEA and SH arise. The implementing partner is also required to maintain standards of ethical conduct regarding SEA and SH.

³ At this time, the requirement of screening partners on PSEA, as enshrined in the 2018 Protocol, has only been implemented for civil society partners through the 2020 Harmonized Implementation Tool on PSEA capacity. It is intended for the assessment process to be expanded to cover additional partners in the near future.



UN-Habitat has also routinely shared via its internal Broadcast the United Nations Victim Statement, “*Your Rights*”, as reminder to staff members and related personnel of the rights of victims/survivors of SEA committed by United Nations including UN-Habitat staff members or related personnel.

I recognize that leadership, transparency and accountability are essential to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse within the United Nations system and hereby certify that I have exercised my duties in this regard diligently, in good faith and to the very best of my abilities.

27 January 2025

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Anacláudia", written in a cursive style.

Anacláudia Rossbach
Under-Secretary General and
Executive Director