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**Executive Board of the United Nations  
Human Settlements Programme  
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Item 12 of the provisional agenda\***

**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 UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual or 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 type 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, the Secretary-General has, since January 2018, 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) placed the rights and dignity of victims at the centre and properly sought to address their needs 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) fully and accurately reported all credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse related to United Nations staff and affiliated personnel serving in their respective organizations; and (c) actively and continuously raised awareness regarding protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including by making relevant training available to their staff and affiliated personnel. The Secretary-General has further requested that heads of entities engage with Member States, civil society and other partners on the matter and pursue all appropriate means to ensure effective protection of populations in this regard, as well as providing information on how their respective organizations ensure that their implementing partners have minimum standards in place to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.
3. The management letter from the Executive Director covering the period 1 January–31 December 2025 is summarized in the present report for consideration by the Executive Board at its first session of 2026. The 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

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\* HSP/EB.2026/1.

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 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) As part of its inter-agency efforts, UN-Habitat – as an active member of the Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) – uses the standardized sexual exploitation and abuse risk assessment tool developed in line with the Inter-Agency Risk Assessment on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Toolkit,<sup>1</sup> as part of the United Nations capacity assessment on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse for implementing partners,<sup>2</sup> and in line with the United Nations protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners,<sup>3</sup> to mitigate risks of sexual exploitation and abuse across projects, in particular for high-risk locations and vulnerable populations. Furthermore, UN-Habitat relies on the operational guidance in the Toolkit, which was developed by the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and builds upon and complements the technical note previously developed by IOM on preparing a joint sexual exploitation and abuse risk assessment (2022). The technical note is fully aligned to the IASC Sexual Exploitation and Abuse Risk Overview index,<sup>4</sup> which provides practical guidance and tools to enable inter-agency networks, co-chairs and coordinators for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and other key stakeholders to carry out inter-agency risk assessments through primary data collection at the country level. Key features of the inter-agency risk assessment approach include: (i) easy-to-use data-collection tools for use with communities, government actors, project managers, senior leadership, clusters and other key actors (pp. 21–25 of the Toolkit); (ii) guidance on creating an actionable sexual exploitation and abuse risk register (pp. 38–41 of the Toolkit); (iii) a set of easy-to-remember indicators for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse using a tailored marker to strengthen mainstreaming of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse in programming (p. 42 of the Toolkit); and (iv) practical tools to strengthen stakeholder buy-in (pp. 11–14 of the Toolkit) and training materials for data collection (pp. 27–28 of the Toolkit);

(b) Through its IASC focal points, UN-Habitat enhanced its participation by conducting bilateral online consultations with actors in the field of protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. The consultations comprised three steps: (i) a review of existing information by members of the IASC Technical Advisory Group on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment; (ii) online consultations with IASC coordinators and network co-chairs for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse; and (iii) an online workshop with IASC coordinators and actors in the fields of accountability to affected populations, gender-based violence and camp coordination and camp management who are involved in referral procedures, as advised by the IOM Coordinator for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. In coordination with the other members of IASC, UN-Habitat took part in the consultations by engaging in 90-minute structured online conversations based on a list of questions to discuss the status of country-level standard operating procedures and the process of developing them (e.g. successes, challenges and areas in which more support is needed). The countries that UN-Habitat supported were Afghanistan and Palestine. The consultations took place in October and November 2025. The overall aim was to support the development or updating of country-level standard operating procedures and to strengthen collaboration with colleagues in the fields of accountability to affected populations, gender-based violence and camp coordination and camp management;

(c) UN-Habitat worked to ensure that effective joint inter-agency complaint and assistance referral mechanisms for allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse are in place at the country level that provide affected communities with a means of reporting allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse in a safe and accessible way, that enable affected communities to come forward in line with their reporting preferences, and that standardize the means of referral of allegations of sexual

<sup>1</sup> Available at [https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/sites/www.un.org.preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/files/inter-agency\\_risk\\_assessment\\_on\\_sea\\_iara\\_sea\\_toolkit.pdf](https://www.un.org/preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/sites/www.un.org.preventing-sexual-exploitation-and-abuse/files/inter-agency_risk_assessment_on_sea_iara_sea_toolkit.pdf).

<sup>2</sup> Available at <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/migrated/2020-09/UN%20IP%20PSEA%20Common%20Assessment%20-%20Final.pdf>.

<sup>3</sup> Available at [http://un.org/en/pdfs/UN%20Protocol%20on%20SEA%20Allegations%20involving%20Implementing%20Partners%20-%20English\\_Final.pdf](http://un.org/en/pdfs/UN%20Protocol%20on%20SEA%20Allegations%20involving%20Implementing%20Partners%20-%20English_Final.pdf).

<sup>4</sup> See <http://interagencystandingcommittee.org/psea-searo-index>.

exploitation and abuse to the appropriate organization for investigation, and of victims/survivors to the appropriate assistance and services. UN-Habitat also shared guidance, tools and resources with its regional and country offices to develop country-level standard operating procedures, in line with the core content of the inter-agency referral procedures;<sup>5</sup>

(d) UN-Habitat increased the number of focal points on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse at its headquarters (three focal points; two female and one male) and regional and country offices (eight focal points) and conducted proactive awareness-raising activities for its staff members and related personnel regarding the prohibition of sexual exploitation and abuse and means of reporting allegations of such acts. At the time of drafting of the present report, 91.5 per cent of UN-Habitat staff members and related personnel had completed induction or refresher training courses on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and had been reminded of their individual obligation to report any such incidents;

(e) UN-Habitat ensured accountability through prompt reporting in accordance with the Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and relevant administrative issuances, and through victim-centred assessment, as part of its commitment to ending impunity. All sexual exploitation and abuse allegations reported to UN-Habitat are handled by the Office of Internal Oversight Services, which has a mandate to investigate such matters. If substantiated, necessary actions are initiated, including thorough investigations and disciplinary measures where appropriate. Cases are managed with a focus on victim-centred approaches and procedural fairness for those involved;

(f) UN-Habitat strengthened its efforts to manage risks related to sexual exploitation and abuse when establishing funded partnerships. In its various legal instruments, UN-Habitat requires 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 to assess their capacity to do so;

(g) UN-Habitat reaffirmed that all its implementing partner agreements include conditions relating to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, thereby obliging implementing partners to ensure all appropriate measures in this regard, such as safe reporting channels, confidential handling of sexual exploitation and abuse cases involving any of their employees or any other persons who may be engaged by the implementing partner to perform services under the respective agreements, and the provision of victim/survivor support in line with the United Nations protocol on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse involving implementing partners. Non-compliance leads to contractual consequences, ensuring adherence to commitments regarding protection from sexual exploitation and abuse;

(h) UN-Habitat 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;

(i) UN-Habitat demonstrated its commitment 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 several internal broadcasts, including reminders of the obligation of all personnel to complete the mandatory training course on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment. With the support of the United Nations Secretariat, UN-Habitat intends to use the iReport SEA Tracker to report all allegations publicly;

(j) The UN-Habitat global focal point for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse consistently broadcast the following documents: (i) a roll-up banner on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (in English and French) that summarizes what sexual exploitation and sexual abuse are, including where to report them; (ii) a brochure on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (in English) that provides an overview of the United Nations principles regarding sexual exploitation and abuse, the responsibilities of all personnel, and the United Nations response to sexual harassment, including how to report it and support mechanisms available to victims; (iii) the United Nations victim statement, entitled “Your rights”, a product of a multi-year consultative process led by the Office of the Victims’ Rights Advocate and involving members of the High-level Steering Group on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse, representatives of agencies, funds and programmes, and other stakeholders, as a reminder to staff members and related personnel of the rights of victims and

<sup>5</sup> See <https://interagencystandingcommittee.org/sites/default/files/2023-11/IASC%20Guidance%20Note%20on%20Inter-Agency%20Sexual%20Exploitation%20and%20Abuse%20Referral%20Procedures.pdf>.

survivors of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by United Nations staff members, including UN-Habitat staff and related personnel, and how the United Nations can assist;

(k) From August to October 2025, UN-Habitat consistently broadcast to all UN-Habitat personnel the annual survey on sexual exploitation and abuse in Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian, Portuguese and Spanish, and completed the exercise in October 2025. The survey revealed nine instances of alleged sexual harassment.

6. In order to further strengthen its efforts relating to 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 2026:

(a) Increase awareness-raising through the continued use of banners and other promotional materials, as displayed at the last sessions of the Executive Board in 2024, 2025 and 2026. UN-Habitat plans to use and disseminate those 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) Participate in the United Nations Secretariat-wide annual surveys on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment;

(d) Enhance reporting on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. In the absence of an assigned staff member, and with existing focal points performing two or three functions, reporting on the matter is very limited. Nonetheless, UN-Habitat welcomes any support and stands ready to work with Member States to translate the action plan for the year 2026 into more solid measures;

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

(f) Finalize the development of the UN-Habitat risk register in order to assist in risk mitigation measures.

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 bulletins 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 2025, there were no reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse. However, there were nine reports of alleged sexual harassment, which are currently being reviewed using a victim-centred approach, with a view to referring them to the Office of Internal Oversight Services, in accordance with the applicable Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and relevant administrative issuances.

9. The report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly at its eightieth session on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/80/644), prepared pursuant to General Assembly resolutions 71/278, 71/297, 72/312, 73/302, 75/321, 76/303, 77/333 and 78/331, contains information on investigations into sexual exploitation and related offences in 2025, including data on relevant allegations received in the preceding calendar year, as well as updated information on measures taken by the United Nations in 2025 to strengthen the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse.