



UN-HABITAT

Agenda item 12

Actions taken by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual exploitation and abuse, and against sexual harassment (PSEA/SH) in the workplace

Executive Board of UN-Habitat: First session for the year 2026
21 to 22 April 2026

AGENDA ITEM 12: Actions by UN-Habitat to strengthen PSEA/SH in the workplace



**ZERO TOLERANCE
FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
AND ABUSE**



Stop, prevent, protect



**SAYING *NO*
TO SEXUAL
MISCONDUCT**



**ZERO TOLERANCE
FOR SEXUAL EXPLOITATION
AND ABUSE**



Perpetrators will be punished

BACKGROUND

- Pursuant to **paragraph 4 (e), decision 2019/4** of the **Executive Board of UN-Habitat**, the Executive Director is requested to provide to the Executive Board, at each of its **first sessions**, an **annual report on *actions taken by UN-Habitat to strengthen protection against sexual exploitation and abuse and against sexual harassment in the workplace.***
- Over the years, as part of the **UN Secretariat**, UN-Habitat embarked on a range of **organization-wide measures, initiatives and recommendations to prevent PSEAH and strengthen the protection of sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment in the workplace including all outposted offices.** These also reflect the UN-wide processes and actions which are contained in the most recent *Report of the Secretary General on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/80/644) published on 16 March 2026.*
- The detailed **UN-Habitat annual report dated 23 February 2026** is contained in the **report of the Executive Director HSP/EB.2026/13**, which was **shared with the Member States and delegates** in March 2026.
- This **presentation, therefore**, only **summarizes** the **key aspects** of the report.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS/MILESTONES

- ❑ To strengthen protection against sexual exploitation in the United Nations, 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) Placed the **rights** and **dignity** of **victims** at the **center** and properly sought to address their needs in a manner consistent with the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support of 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 organization; and
 - (c) Actively and continuously raised awareness and provided **training** on the **prevention** of **sexual exploitation and abuse** available to their **staff and affiliated personnel**.
- ❑ The Secretary-General further **requested** **heads of entities** to ensure they put in place **minimum standards** in place to **prevent** and **respond** to **sexual exploitation and abuse cases or allegations**.

RECENT DEVELOPMENTS/MILESTONES

→ The **Management Letter** from the **Executive Director** covering the period from **1 January 2025 to 31 December 2025**, summarized in the **present report**, was **submitted** to the Secretary-General in **February 2026** in which the **Executive Director** certified as follows:

(a) That **UN-Habitat** has **acted** on and **fully and accurately reported all allegations** it has received of **sexual exploitation and abuse** related to **UN-Habitat staff** and its **affiliated personnel**;

(b) Provided **training** on the **prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse available** to **UN-Habitat staff** and **affiliated personnel** and took the **necessary actions** aimed at **strengthening protection** from and **reporting** of **allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse**. Examples include, **Community of Practice (CoP) online training** to **re-sensitize** all UN-Habitat personnel on the **prevention of and responding to SEA**; **Online PSEA training** conducted at **ROAf, ROAP** and their **country offices**.

ACTIONS BY UN-HABITAT IN 2025

- ➔ **Using the inter-agency IARA SEA Toolkit** - as part of the **UN IP PSEA capacity assessment** to **identify and mitigate SEA risks**, especially in high-risk contexts. The toolkit now constitutes a key component of the UN-Habitat's **Risk Register**.
- ➔ **Contributing to IASC PSEA efforts** - participating in **online consultations** that included reviewing existing SEA information, engaging with IASC PSEA Coordinators and Network Co-Chairs, and joining a workshop with PSEA, AAP, GBV, and CCCM actors on referral processes, **UN-Habitat supported Afghanistan and Palestine** by helping review and update country-level SOPs, identify challenges, and strengthen inter-agency collaboration.
- ➔ **Ensuring effective joint inter-agency SEA complaint and referral mechanisms** - These mechanisms were put in place at **country level**, providing affected communities with safe, accessible reporting channels and clear pathways for **referring allegations** to the **appropriate investigative bodies** and victims/survivors to needed services. It also provided its Regional and Country Offices with **guidance, tools, and resources to develop country-level SOPs aligned with the Inter-Agency SEA Referral Procedures.**

ACTIONS BY UN-HABITAT IN 2025

- **Expanded the number of PSEA focal point network** - appointing **three focal points** at **headquarters** and **eight** across **Regional and Country Offices**, while proactively **conducting awareness-raising activities** for staff on SEA prohibitions and reporting procedures. At the time of reporting, **91.5% of UN-Habitat personnel had completed mandatory induction or refresher PSEA training** and had been reminded of their responsibility to report any SEA concerns.
- **Reinforced accountability by ensuring prompt reporting and applying victim-centred assessments** - in line with **UN Staff Regulations and administrative rules**. All SEA allegations were investigated by the **Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS)**, and when substantiated, **appropriate actions, including thorough investigations and disciplinary measures, were taken, ensuring both victim-centred support and procedural fairness.**
- **Strengthened its management of SEA-related risks** - in **funded partnerships and collaboration agreements** by requiring civil society and other implementing partners to **meet minimum PSEA standards** and maintain **policies to prevent and respond to SEA.**

ACTIONS BY UN-HABITAT IN 2025

- Ensured that all implementing partner agreements included mandatory provisions on preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment – requiring **partners** to maintain **safe reporting channels, handle SEA cases confidentially**, and **provide victim/survivor support in line with UN-wide protocols**.
- **Completed the annual PSEA action plan** – conducting **risk assessments** across **all operations and programmes**, acted on identified risks, and continued to review these findings regularly to **ensure ongoing improvements in preventing and responding to SEA**.
- **Complied and reinforced the zero-tolerance policy on SEA** – by treating **all allegations seriously**, reminding staff and personnel **to complete mandatory PSEA/SH training**, and preparing to use the **iReport SEA Tracker** for public reporting.
- **Circulated its annual multilingual SEA survey to all personnel** – completed the exercise in **October 2025** and identifying **nine alleged cases of sexual harassment**. Results are being reviewed by management.

ACTION PLANS FOR THE YEAR 2026

- **Increase awareness-raising** through the **continued use of banners and other promotional materials**, as displayed at the last sessions 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**. The Legal Office will have a focal point for PSEAH at the event.
- **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.
- **Enhance Participation in the UN-secretariat wide annual surveys** on **sexual exploitation and abuse** and **sexual harassment**.
- **Enhance reporting on allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and encouraging complainants and victims to report cases without fear of retaliation.**
- **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.
- **Finalise the development of UN-Habitat's risk register** to **assist** in **risk mitigation measures**.
- **UN-Habitat Senior Management Team (SMT) PSEA online workshop** with the **USG of OSCSEA** on **PSEA/SH** is scheduled for 24 April 2026 to **resensitize and commit them to the UN PSEA zero tolerance policy**. The **key messages will be cascaded to all UN-Habitat personnel**.

REPORTS ON ALLEGATIONS AND INVESTIGATIONS

- **Reports on Cases** – In **2025**, there **no reported allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse**. However, there were **9 reports of alleged sexual harassment** which are **currently being reviewed with a view to referral to OIOS** in accordance with the applicable Staff Regulations and Rules of the United Nations and administrative issuances, and victim-centred assessment.
- The **Secretary-General's report** to the General Assembly at its **eightieth session** on **investigations into sexual exploitation and related offences in 2025**, including data on allegations received during the previous year, is now **available** (see <https://docs.un.org/en/a/80/644>). The accompanying **report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse (A/80/644)**, prepared pursuant to relevant General Assembly resolutions, provides **updated information on actions taken by the United Nations** from 1 January to 31 December 2025 to **strengthen prevention and response efforts**. The report provides **key messages**, including **current progress and challenges**, the **way forward** and the data overview of the **total number of allegations in the UN system**, which, for 2025, was **520**.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ❑ As the Executive Director has mentioned, amid the shrinking budgets, the **hard-won progress on PSEA cannot be allowed to erode**. The **United Nations** and its **Member States** must immediately and decisively invest in strengthening accountability; continue upholding the rights of victims; and institutionalizing PSEA across the organization and with its partners, including by **securing adequate, predictable, and sustainable funding for PSEA and victim assistance**.
- ❑ **Support for a more comprehensive revision of the bulletin as indicated in the SG's report.**
- ❑ **More training and awareness raising** to be undertaken on the **legal and investigatory framework** relating to **sexual exploitation and abuse**.
- ❑ **Need for continued awareness raising activities** particularly with **partners** and other **stakeholders**.
- ❑ **Ensuring consistency and symmetry** in the **handling of sexual exploitation and abuse across the organization** and continued cooperation with the **Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC)** and other **UN sister agencies** and **partners**.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND PROPOSED ACTIONS

- ❑ **More outreach and awareness raising activities** to be conducted in **field offices** particularly in those where there is **high risk to encourage the reporting of cases**.
- ❑ **Engagement of partners and other stakeholders** on the **need to ensure protection against sexual exploitation and abuse in furtherance of the organization's zero-tolerance policy**, e.g., inclusion of **PSEA measures** and **safeguarding provisions** in all **project documents**.
- ❑ **Ending impunity and handling all reports with the utmost care, efficiency and diligence**, together with the **imposition of stringent penalties**.
- ❑ **UN-Habitat aligns with the priority areas** that will guide **UN system-wide action plan** contained in the **Report of the Secretary-General A/80/644** as follows:
 - **Sustainable resourcing** for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse;
 - **Strengthening our policies and guidance**;
 - **Institutionalizing a victim-centered approach to PSEA**; and
 - **Renewing the UN-wide PSEA strategy and transforming organizational culture**.

Thank you!

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