

## **UNGA 74: CANZ Statement**

### **Criminal Accountability of UN Officials and Experts on Mission**

I have the honour today of speaking on behalf of Australia, New Zealand, and my own country, Canada.

UN Officials and experts on mission play an important role in creating the conditions for lasting peace. Every day, tens of thousands of individuals from countries across the globe are engaged in maintaining peace and security, delivering humanitarian assistance and helping to rebuild societies, and supporting development, all in the name of the United Nations. These people are trusted to use their positions of relative influence and power to advance the purposes and principles of the United Nations, and often to assist thousands of the most vulnerable people in the world. CANZ commends their important work.

However, the deplorable acts of a few UN officials and experts, and the failure to hold them accountable, intensifies and proliferates suffering among the people they are mandated to help and protect. It undermines the reputation, credibility, and integrity and impartiality of UN Missions, and the United Nations as a whole.

In closing the impunity gap, it is therefore important that Member States and the UN develop a culture in which individuals are encouraged and supported to report misconduct and alleged crimes and establish appropriate safeguards against retaliation.

We recognize the leadership demonstrated by the Secretary General of the UN in responding to this grave problem, notably through its adoption of the zero-tolerance policy and we commend the UN for its increased commitment to transparency and reporting on wrongdoing within the organization. Understanding the scope of the problem is critical to bringing about the change that is required.

We are concerned that sexual exploitation and abuse, corruption, fraud and other financial crimes are committed by UN officials and experts too frequently. We note that for the first two quarters of this year, 75 allegations of sexual exploitation or abuse involving UN

personnel have been reported. We urge the UN to ensure that all of these allegations are investigated in an impartial, thorough, and timely manner, and to ensure that substantiated cases are appropriately dealt with, whether through disciplinary measures or through referral to home states.

We also continue to encourage the UN to undertake analysis of the cases, to better understand the dynamics giving rise to these crimes.

It is also useful to have the updated table of national provisions regarding Member States' establishment of jurisdiction over their nationals for relevant criminal offences. In this regard, we thank the Secretary General for the latest update of the table as of June 2019. We would encourage all Member States to contribute to this table to provide clarity on where jurisdiction can be established and where gaps remain.

CANZ is acutely aware that all Member States need to do more to address the criminal accountability of UN officials and experts on mission. Member States have the primary responsibility to prevent misconduct and crimes from occurring by instilling a culture of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse. Corruption, fraud and related financial crimes must be in our sight. Member States also have a responsibility to implement measures including pre-deployment training and screening. Member States need to do more, to investigate and prosecute credible allegations of criminal misconduct by our nationals. We urge Member States that have not yet done so to consider establishing jurisdiction over serious crimes committed by their nationals while serving as UN officials or experts on mission. We stress that all Member States should investigate allegations of criminal conduct by their nationals, cooperate with other Member States in these criminal matters, and hold perpetrators accountable according to their domestic criminal law. We also encourage Member States to share information on any obstacles to effective prosecution they may encounter, whether jurisdictional, evidentiary, or otherwise.

If our commitment to the rules based order is to be more than rhetoric, the UN and its Member States must lead by example. We encourage the international community to hold to account those individuals who commit crimes while on mission. Such deplorable conduct undermines the work of the United Nations. We therefore support, in principle, the proposal for a convention that would require Member States to exercise criminal

jurisdiction over their nationals participating in UN operations abroad. We would welcome further discussions on the feasibility of such a convention.

In closing, let us reiterate our unwavering support to the zero-tolerance policy of the Secretary General. No one, including UN officials and experts on mission, who are the "face" of the United Nations to the world, should be above or outside the law.