



**New Zealand Permanent Mission to the United Nations  
Te Aka Aorere**

**United Nations General Assembly: Sixth Committee  
Seventy-eighth session - Criminal accountability of United  
Nations officials and experts on mission (Agenda item 76)**

**CANZ Statement delivered by  
Second Secretary, Zoe Russell**

10 October 2023

**CHECK AGAINST DELIVERY**



Thank you [Mr/Madam] Chair.

I have the honour to speak today on behalf of Australia and Canada, as well as my own country, New Zealand.

United Nations officials and experts on mission continue to play a crucial role in maintaining peace and security, delivering humanitarian assistance, protecting vulnerable communities, advancing the rule of law and supporting development, often at great risk to their personal safety. We deeply appreciate their work.

We recognize that the vast majority of UN officials and experts on mission conduct their work in accordance with the highest standards of efficiency, competence and integrity, as articulated in Article 101 of the UN Charter.

However, the criminal acts of a few inflict significant harm, and undermine the mandate of their missions. All forms of criminal conduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse, corruption and other financial crimes, cast a long shadow, eroding the reputation, credibility, integrity, and impartiality of UN missions. This is compounded in circumstances where there is a failure to hold perpetrators to account.

We reiterate our whole-hearted support for the UN's zero tolerance policy for criminal misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse. We commend the Secretary-General's continued demand that all United Nations personnel, including uniformed personnel deployed in peacekeeping and special political missions, maintain the highest standards of integrity.

We recognise the leadership of the Secretary-General, in responding to this challenge, and thank him for his ongoing reporting including on credible allegations that UN officials or experts on mission may have committed a crime. We commend the UN's strengthened commitment to transparency and reporting on wrongdoing, and call on Member States to support this by providing relevant information on their responses to criminal allegations.

We reiterate our endorsement of the Secretary-General's recommendation that Member States continue to encourage the distinct legislative bodies of the UN system and related organisations to help ensure coherence and coordination between policies and procedures relating to UN officials and experts on mission.

This recommendation is important for sending a strong signal that there is no place for criminal conduct, anywhere in the UN system. We support further efforts by the UN system to continue assessing the adequacy of existing policies and procedures and to promote enhanced cooperation on these important matters.

We also agree with the Secretary-General's focus on preventative action, and we commend practical measures to strengthen existing pre-deployment training and vetting measures. Staff members who join the UN and police and military personnel deployed in field missions must be made fully aware of the requirement to abide by the UN standards of conduct, including the obligation to respect the law of the host country and uphold the highest standards of integrity.

But all Member States also need to do more to prevent and respond to misconduct and crimes by their nationals while serving as UN officials and experts on mission.

To start, we encourage Member States to agree to begin working together to establish standards for enhancing screening mechanisms for deploying officials and experts on UN missions.

Another crucial facet of closing the accountability gap is the development by Member States and the UN of a culture in which individuals are genuinely supported to come forward and report misconduct and alleged crimes with appropriate safeguards against reprisal. The prioritisation of victims' and survivors' rights and dignity remains central to securing accountability.

The UN and its Member States must continue to strengthen their mechanisms for both preventing and responding to criminal wrongdoing. It is essential, both individually and collectively, that we build a culture that is genuinely supportive of victims, survivors, witnesses, and other individuals who come forward to report criminal allegations and misconduct. We stress that all Member States should investigate allegations of criminal conduct by their nationals who serve as UN officials and experts, cooperate with other Member States in these criminal matters to hold perpetrators to account.

We continue to support, in principle, the proposal for a convention that would serve to address issues related to the exercise of jurisdiction by Member States over their nationals who participate in UN operations abroad. We welcome further dialogue on the feasibility of such a convention.

Australia, Canada and New Zealand consider the issue of accountability for sexual exploitation, abuse and harassment, as well as fraud and corruption, to be of utmost importance.

I thank you [Mr/Madam] Chair.