

**Remarks by**  
**H.E. [Prime Minister Hailemariam Dessalegn](#)**  
**Of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia**

**18 September 2017**

We thank you for convening this high-level meeting on combatting sexual exploitation and abuse. We appreciate the leadership and commitment that you have demonstrated on the prevention and combating sexual exploitation and abuse as well as the measures you have taken in this regard since you assumed office in January 2017.

We are indeed pleased to participate at this high-level meeting which is aimed at mobilizing the international community for combating this scourge. We wish to seize this opportunity to reiterate our strong condemnation of all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse throughout the United Nations system and reaffirm our commitment and support to the implementation of the United Nations Zero-Tolerance Policy on sexual exploitation and abuse. We will also carefully study the voluntary compact on commitment to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse.

As a major troop contributing country, the protection of civilians, particularly children and women who usually find themselves in a vulnerable situation, is of utmost importance for us. We fully recognize our obligation to ensure that our peacekeepers respect applicable international humanitarian and human rights law. We also provide them with the necessary and adequate pre-deployment training on civilian protection, including on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. Let me say we are very proud of the performance of our troops in this regard.

We are indeed fully aware of our primary obligation to investigate allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse and we have done so whenever we receive reports of such allegations against our own peacekeepers. However, what we have seen from our own experiences is that some of those allegations do not even meet the minimum evidentiary standards. Allegations which have not been properly verified and substantiated will not only undermine the credibility of the concerned TCCs but also that of UN peace operations as a whole. It wouldn't be proper to make it appear, and I know this is not the intention of the Secretary General, that this is what defines the character of UN peacekeepers.

Therefore, we believe there is absolute need in handling this matter very carefully. That is why we welcome the adoption of the General Assembly resolution on 10 March 2017, which underscored the need to ensure accountability, prevent and combat impunity, while also stressing the need for credible reporting of allegations to contribute positively to the effectiveness of the United Nations in combating sexual exploitation and abuse.

In our view, there is an urgent need to review and standardize procedures for verifying allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse before informing the concerned troop contributing countries, and prior to public reporting which should uniformly apply to both United Nations personnel and non-UN forces operating under the mandate of Security Council. Once allegations have been properly investigated and no evidence has been found, they should be cleared from reports.

Finally, the involvement and active participation of all member States including Troop Contributing Countries is indeed very critical to find a comprehensive solution to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse, and we hope you will continue to engage and consult with member States and particularly TCCs in fighting this scourge which is tarnishing the image of the United Nations and the thousands of peacekeepers who continue to risk their lives every single day in the field while executing their mandates on behalf of the international community. We don't believe this aspect of the role of UN peacekeepers is highlighted enough. All the same, I am very appreciative, Mr. Secretary-General of the initiative you took in connection with the Compact. You can count on our support.

I thank you.