

High-Level Meeting on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse
Convened by the Secretary-General

Statement by

H.E. Mr. Sauli Niinistö
President of the Republic of Finland

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(check against delivery)

Mr. Secretary-General, Excellencies, Ladies and Gentlemen,

I thank you for organizing this important event.

I welcome the Secretary-General's leadership in dealing with this problem.

Finland supports the Secretary-General's strategy to prevent and end sexual exploitation and abuse and has joined the voluntary Compact on SEA.

The issue is not an easy one.

We all agree that it is outrageous that anyone serving under the UN flag abuses the people they are sent to protect.

Continued sexual exploitation poses a serious threat to the reputation and credibility of the UN, and it undermines its effectiveness in the field.

Mr. Secretary-General,

In your new strategy you have stressed the importance of partnerships: the UN cannot succeed alone.

We as member states have a common responsibility to make the zero-tolerance policy a zero-case reality.

My own country, Finland, is content but not complacent about the fact that we have not had a single case of SEA during more than sixty years of Finnish participation in UN peacekeeping.

Despite the good record, we are working hard on turning the recommendations and commitments on sexual exploitation and abuse into concrete action.

The aim is to both combat and to prevent SEA, and to ensure that allegations are duly investigated and needed assistance is provided for the victims.

Sexual exploitation and abuse is criminalized in our national legislation and taken into account in the internal regulation of the Finnish Defence Forces. Finnish Defence Forces have developed its own Code of Conduct to implement the principle of zero tolerance with regard to SEA as well as gender-based violence in general.

All peacekeepers receive pre-deployment training on the issues, and are committed to implementing the highest standards and UN code of conduct.

Training and education is key in preventing sexual exploitation.

The Finnish Defence Forces International Centre FINCENT was the first training center in the world to receive UN certification for an operational level United Nations Protection of Civilians Course.

Questions related to SEA are a crucial part of the course content.

I also want to stress the importance of mainstreaming Women, Peace and Security, as well as other gender perspectives into peacekeeping and operational work.

Making sure that we include women in all peace and security work is part of preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse.

Prevention of SEA is integrated in our National Action Plan to implement the resolution 1325 on Women, Peace and Security.

To conclude, I am proud to be part of the Circle of Leadership with other leaders of the world – to demonstrate my personal commitment to making SEA a thing of the past.

Thank you!