

High Level Meeting on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

Statement by
Her Excellency Sheikh Hasina
Hon'ble Prime Minister
Government of the People's Republic of Bangladesh

United Nations, New York
18 September 2017

Mr. Secretary General,

Excellences,

Ladies and Gentlemen,

I am delighted to be present here in this High Level meeting on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse - S.E.A. I thank the Secretary General for taking lead in combating his scourge of S.E.A. within the UN system and beyond.

We had experienced worst form of sexual violence during our war of liberation. Over two hundred thousands women were violated by the Pakistan occupation forces and their collaborators. Father of the Nation Bangabandhu Sheikh Mujibur Rahman took a bold initiative to acknowledge their contribution to our liberation and recognized them as 'Birangana' (meaning 'war heroes'). We have ensured justice by trying the perpetrators and the abettors of such heinous crimes through international crimes tribunal.

Mr. Secretary General,

As a major troop and police contributing country in the UN peacekeeping, we attach high importance to the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse. In this context, our approach is 'zero tolerance' to the allegations of sexual violence by the peacekeepers.

Bangladeshi peacekeepers have consistently maintained good image and credibility almost in all missions. This was due to our strong moral values, effective motivation and high standard of discipline.

Two allegations that we received in all these years have been dealt with strongly. One accused proven guilty has been punished with dismissal from service and imprisonment.

Excellencies,

Allegations of sexual abuse against the peacekeepers are handled with extreme urgency. The members under such allegations are immediately repatriated at his own expenses. His/her UN allowances are suspended until the investigation is complete.

‘Protection against S.E.A.’ has been made an integral part of our pre-deployment training.

Our contingent commanders have been empowered with legal and administrative authority to address any allegation of S.E.A.. They can investigate and prosecute the allegations within the mission area. The senior most peacekeeper in the Mission area has the authority to take disciplinary actions against the Bangladeshi peacekeepers if they are charged with any criminal offence.

Ladies and gentlemen,

Bangladesh remains committed to the Secretary General’s noble initiative to eradicate sexual violence and abuse. To that end, Bangladesh has already conveyed its endorsement to the ‘**voluntary compact**’.

Mr. Secretary General,

We believe the victims of sexual exploitation and abuse deserve justice and also opportunities for rehabilitation. In this regard, I would like to pledge 100,000 US dollars of token contribution to the victim support fund.

Ladies & Gentlemen

Bangladesh has become a trend setter in peace support operations for our utmost dedication and professionalism, and high respect for the religious, cultural and social values of the people we serve. Our commitment to peacekeeping is reaffirmed through the supreme sacrifice made by 132 of our valiant sons. We remain steadfast in our resolve to continue our meaningful participation in the maintenance of international peace and security through UN peacekeeping operations.

Excellencies,

I wish to conclude by expressing our resolve to strengthen the Secretary General's hands by providing timely support at all times.

I thank you all.