

STATEMENT BY THE UNITED KINGDOM ON THE OCCASION OF THE HIGH LEVEL MEETING ON COMBATTING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE

NEW YORK, 19 SEPTEMBER 2017

The United Kingdom welcomes the Secretary General's determination to eradicate sexual exploitation and abuse by both peacekeepers and civilians from within the UN and those operating in its name. Zero tolerance is a priority for the UK and we want see those who have committed heinous crimes are dealt with swiftly and effectively. The protection of children in particular, from rape, sexual exploitation and abuse is a top priority for us.

We have to work together to ensure that this pernicious crime is weeded out. That is why the UK has just signed the Voluntary Compact, and that is why the Prime Minister has joined the Secretary General's Circle of Leadership. The Compact is an agreement by all of us – the UN family and its Member States - to deliver protection for the most vulnerable. We will do our part to ensure that the measures we have signed up to are implemented.

But while the Compact is mainly directed at peacekeeping, it also applies to the staff, experts and officials of all Agencies in the UN system. Full implementation of the Secretary General's measures by the whole UN family is a matter of urgency. We want to see an end to these abuses and repair the damage caused to the relationship between those who are appointed to protect the vulnerable and the populations they serve. Every reported allegation which is not investigated and every perpetrator who goes unpunished is a continuing blot on the reputation of the UN.

We hope the Compact will lead to more effective co-operation between all three pillars of the UN, the Special Coordinator on SEA Jane Holl Lute and the newly appointed Victims Rights Advocate, Jane Connors. We hope that actions will be agreed to increase transparency, ensure greater accountability and end impunity, but not just at UN headquarters but also on the ground at field level. It is vital that local community groups are involved and included in the drive to prevent and deal with cases of SEA.

But we are not asking the UN Agencies to do anything we are not prepared to do ourselves. We will ensure that we have put in place appropriate measures both within Government but also through the partners and implementing agencies through whom we work, especially in the delivery of our international assistance. We are already supporting the work of the Special Coordinator on SEA, the Conduct and Discipline Unit of the Department for Field Support and providing training to peacekeepers on sexual violence and women's rights.

There is a lot more to do. The UK is already looking into what more we can do, how we can help those most affected and ultimately how we can stop Sexual Exploitation and Abuse.

Transparency and accountability for the actions of all those that operate in the name of the UN and of national Governments is critical. In that regard, the UN must lead by example. It is something that together we can and must stamp out. By this time next year we must move from zero tolerance to zero incidents.