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Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission

Report of the Sixth Committee

Rapporteur: Ms. Ana L. **Villalobos** (Costa Rica)

I. Introduction

1. The item entitled "Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission" was included in the provisional agenda of the seventy-sixth session of the General Assembly pursuant to Assembly resolution 75/132 of 15 December 2020.

2. At its 2nd plenary meeting, on 17 September 2021, the General Assembly, on the recommendation of the General Committee, decided to include the item in its agenda and to allocate it to the Sixth Committee.

3. The Sixth Committee considered the item at its 7th, 8th and 29th meetings, on 12 and 13 October and on 18 November 2021. The views of the representatives who spoke during the Committee's consideration of the item are reflected in the relevant summary records.[1]

4. For its consideration of the item, the Committee had before it reports of the Secretary-General (A/76/205 and A/76/208).

II. Consideration of draft resolution A/C.6/76/L.12

5. At the 29th meeting, on 18 November, the representative of Pakistan, on behalf of the Bureau, introduced a draft resolution entitled "Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission" (A/C.6/76/L.12).

6. At the same meeting, the Committee adopted draft resolution A/C.6/76/L.12 without a vote (see para. 7).

[1] A/C.6/76/SR.7, A/C.6/76/SR.8 and A/C.6/76/SR.29.

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III. Recommendation of the Sixth Committee

7. The Sixth Committee recommends to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolution:

Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission

The General Assembly,

Recalling its resolution 59/281 of 29 March 2005, in which it endorsed the recommendation of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations that the Secretary-General make available to the United Nations membership a comprehensive report on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping operations,[1]

Recalling also that the Secretary-General, on 24 March 2005, transmitted to the President of the General Assembly a report of his Adviser concerning sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel,[2]

Recalling further its resolution 59/300 of 22 June 2005, in which it endorsed the recommendation of the Special Committee that a group of legal experts be established to provide advice on the best way to proceed so as to ensure that the original intent of the Charter of the United Nations can be achieved, namely, that United Nations staff and experts on mission would never be effectively exempt from the consequences of criminal acts committed at their duty station, nor unjustly penalized, without due process,[3]

Underlining the importance of a zero-tolerance policy for misconduct and the commission of crimes by United Nations officials and experts on mission,

Recognizing the valuable contribution of United Nations officials and experts on mission towards the fulfilment of the purposes and principles of the Charter,

Honouring the heroic work of tens of thousands of United Nations officials and experts on mission, underscoring that the United Nations should not let the actions of a few tarnish the achievements of the whole, and commending the Member States that have taken steps to prevent, investigate and hold accountable their personnel for criminal conduct, such as that involving sexual exploitation and abuse,

Reaffirming the need to promote and ensure respect for the principles and rules of international law,

Reaffirming also that the present resolution is without prejudice to the privileges and immunities of United Nations officials and experts on mission and the United Nations under international law,

Reaffirming further the obligation of United Nations officials and experts on mission to respect the national laws of the host State, as well as the right of the host State to exercise, where applicable, its criminal jurisdiction, in accordance with the relevant rules of international law and agreements governing operations of United Nations missions,

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[1] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 19* (A/59/19/Rev.1), part one, chap. III, sect. D, para. 56.

[2] See A/59/710.

[3] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Fifty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 19* (A/59/19/Rev.1), part two, chap. II, sect. N, para. 40 (a).

Underlining the importance of appropriate training of United Nations officials and experts on mission to prevent any criminal conduct,

Deeply concerned by reports of criminal conduct, and conscious that such conduct, if not investigated and, as appropriate, prosecuted, would create the negative impression that United Nations officials and experts on mission operate with impunity,

Reaffirming the need to ensure that all United Nations officials and experts on mission function in a manner that preserves the image, credibility, impartiality and integrity of the United Nations,

Emphasizing that crimes committed by such persons are unacceptable and have a detrimental effect on the fulfilment of the mandate of the United Nations, in particular with respect to the relations between the United Nations and the local population in the host country,

Conscious of the critical importance of providing expeditious support and protecting the rights of victims of criminal conduct perpetrated by United Nations officials and experts on mission, as well as of ensuring adequate protection for witnesses, and recalling the adoption of its resolution 62/214 of 21 December 2007 on the United Nations Comprehensive Strategy on Assistance and Support to Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse by United Nations Staff and Related Personnel, as well as of its resolution 71/297 of 30 June 2017 on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse,

Emphasizing that genuine accountability rests on the cooperation of the Member States,

Emphasizing also the need to enhance international cooperation to ensure the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission,

Taking note of the report of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations on uniting our strengths for peace: politics, partnership and people,[4] and of the subsequent report of the Secretary-General entitled "The future of United Nations peace operations: implementation of the recommendations of the High-level Independent Panel on Peace Operations",[5]

Taking note also of the report of the Joint Inspection Unit on fraud prevention, detection and response in United Nations system organizations,[6] the Anti-Fraud and Anti-Corruption Framework of the United Nations Secretariat of September 2016[7] and the report of the Secretary-General on his practice in disciplinary matters and cases of criminal behaviour from 1 January to 31 December 2019,[8]

Recalling its resolution 61/29 of 4 December 2006, by which it established the Ad Hoc Committee on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission,

Having considered at its previous sessions the report of the Group of Legal Experts established by the Secretary-General pursuant to its resolution 59/300[9] and the reports of the Ad Hoc Committee,[10] as well as the note by the Secretariat[11] and the

[4] See A/70/95-S/2015/446.
[5] A/70/357-S/2015/682.
[6] A/71/731.
[7] ST/IC/2016/25, annex.
[8] A/75/648.
[9] See A/60/980.
[10] *Official Records of the General Assembly, Sixty-second Session, Supplement No. 54* (A/62/54); and ibid., *Sixty-third Session, Supplement No. 54* (A/63/54).
[11] A/62/329.

reports of the Secretary-General[12] on criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission,

Recalling its resolutions 62/63 of 6 December 2007, 63/119 of 11 December 2008, 64/110 of 16 December 2009, 65/20 of 6 December 2010, 66/93 of 9 December 2011, 67/88 of 14 December 2012, 68/105 of 16 December 2013, 69/114 of 10 December 2014, 70/114 of 14 December 2015, 71/134 of 13 December 2016, 72/112 of 7 December 2017, 73/196 of 20 December 2018, 74/181 of 18 December 2019 and 75/132 of 15 December 2020,

Recalling also its decision that, bearing in mind its resolutions 62/63 and 70/114, the consideration of the report of the Group of Legal Experts, in particular its legal aspects, taking into account the views of Member States and also noting the inputs by the Secretariat, would be continued during its seventy-seventh session in the framework of a working group of the Sixth Committee,

Convinced of the continuing need for the United Nations and its Member States to urgently take strong and effective steps to ensure the criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission in the interest of justice,

Emphasizing that the development of harmonized United Nations standards of investigation of crimes allegedly committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission can be critical to strengthening the United Nations system of accountability,

1. *Takes note* of the reports of the Secretary-General,[13] in particular annexes I and II to the report submitted pursuant to paragraphs 31 and 32 of its resolution 75/132,[14] which provide additional information on the nature of the allegations and information received from States on all referrals since 1 July 2007 and notifications received from States with respect to investigations or prosecutions of crimes allegedly committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission since 1 July 2016;

2. *Also takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse,[15] and recalls all of the relevant resolutions of the General Assembly on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and on the United Nations action on sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as the findings of the Office of Internal Oversight Services of the Secretariat in its evaluation report of 22 March 2021;[16]

3. *Welcomes* the commitment of the Secretary-General to refer credible allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse to the Member State of the United Nations officials or experts on mission for appropriate action;

4. *Also welcomes* the work of the Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and requests the Secretary-General to regularly update Member States on progress with respect to the implementation of the mandate of the Special Coordinator;

5. *Expresses its concern* with respect to all alleged crimes on the part of United Nations officials and experts on mission, including allegations of fraud, corruption and other financial crimes, and in that regard welcomes the reaffirmation

[12] A/63/260, A/63/260/Add.1, A/64/183, A/64/183/Add.1, A/65/185, A/66/174, A/66/174/Add.1, A/67/213, A/68/173, A/69/210, A/70/208, A/72/121, A/72/126, A/72/205, A/73/128, A/73/129, A/73/155, A/74/142, A/74/145, A/75/217 and A/75/228.

[13] A/76/205 and A/76/208.

[14] A/76/208.

[15] A/75/754.

[16] A/75/820, entitled “Evaluation of the prevention, response and victim support efforts against sexual exploitation and abuse by the United Nations Secretariat staff and related personnel”.

by the Secretary-General that there will be no tolerance for any corruption at the United Nations;

6. *Urges* the Secretary-General to continue to ensure that his zero-tolerance policy for criminal activities, such as sexual exploitation and abuse, fraud and corruption, is made known to all United Nations officials and experts on mission at all levels, especially those in managerial positions, and is fully implemented in a coherent and coordinated manner throughout the United Nations, including funds and programmes, and calls upon all entities in the United Nations to inform and to cooperate fully with the Office of Legal Affairs of the Secretariat in all cases involving allegations that a crime may have been committed by a United Nations official or expert on mission;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to ensure greater quality and consistency in investigations by investigative entities of the Organization through the development of harmonized standards of investigation, including verification of allegations and information received;

8. *Expresses its concern* with respect to the low rate of response from States to referred allegations and to requests for information on their provisions addressing the establishment of jurisdiction over crimes, as urged in its resolution 75/132, and in particular expresses its deep concern with regard to the significant number of instances where States to which allegations have been referred have failed to advise the United Nations of any steps taken in response to such referrals, and also with regard to the failure to acknowledge such referrals;

9. *Strongly urges* States to take all appropriate measures to ensure that crimes by United Nations officials and experts on mission do not go unpunished and that the perpetrators of such crimes are brought to justice, without prejudice to the privileges and immunities of such persons and the United Nations under international law, and in accordance with international human rights standards, including due process;

10. *Strongly urges* all States to consider establishing, to the extent that they have not yet done so, jurisdiction over crimes, particularly those of a serious nature, as known in their existing national criminal laws, committed by their nationals while serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission, at least where the conduct as defined in the law of the State establishing jurisdiction also constitutes a crime under the laws of the host State, and, further, urges States and appropriate international organizations to provide technical and other appropriate assistance in developing such legal measures to States requesting such support;

11. *Encourages* all States and the United Nations to cooperate with each other in the exchange of information and in facilitating the conduct of investigations and, as appropriate, the prosecution of United Nations officials and experts on mission who are alleged to have committed crimes of a serious nature, in accordance with their national law and applicable United Nations rules and regulations, fully respecting due process rights, as well as to consider strengthening the capacities of their national authorities to investigate and prosecute such crimes;

12. *Encourages* all States:

(a) To afford each other assistance in connection with criminal investigations or criminal or extradition proceedings in respect of crimes of a serious nature committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission, including assistance in obtaining evidence at their disposal, in accordance with their national law or any treaties or other arrangements on extradition and mutual legal assistance that may exist between them;

(b) In accordance with their national law, to explore ways and means of facilitating the possible use of information and material obtained from the United Nations for purposes of criminal proceedings initiated in their territory for the prosecution of crimes of a serious nature committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission, bearing in mind due process considerations;

(c) In accordance with their national law, to provide effective protection for victims of, witnesses to and others who provide information in relation to crimes of a serious nature alleged to have been committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission and to facilitate access of victims to victim assistance programmes, without prejudice to the rights of the alleged offender, including those relating to due process;

(d) In accordance with their national law, to explore ways and means of responding adequately to requests by host States for support and assistance in order to enhance their capacity to conduct effective investigations in respect of crimes of a serious nature alleged to have been committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission;

13. *Requests* the Secretariat to continue to ensure that requests to Member States seeking personnel to serve as experts on mission make States aware of the expectation that persons who serve in that capacity should meet high standards in their conduct and behaviour and be aware that certain conduct may amount to a crime for which they may be held accountable, and also requests the Secretariat to take all appropriate measures to continue to ensure that all such personnel, as well as United Nations officials, are properly vetted by the States contributing personnel and by the Organization for any prior misconduct while serving with the United Nations;

14. *Urges* the Secretary-General to make Member States contributing personnel to serve as experts on mission aware of the necessity of providing appropriate conduct-related training prior to deployment, and also urges the Secretary-General to continue to take such practical measures as are within his authority to strengthen existing training on United Nations standards of conduct, including through predeployment and in-mission induction training for United Nations officials and experts on mission;

15. *Reiterates* its decision that, bearing in mind its resolutions 62/63 and 63/119, the consideration of the report of the Group of Legal Experts, in particular its legal aspects, taking into account the views of Member States and also noting the inputs by the Secretariat, shall be continued during its seventy-seventh session in the framework of a working group of the Sixth Committee, and, for that purpose, invites further comments from Member States on that report, including on the question of future action;

16. *Takes note* of the briefings by the Secretariat during the seventieth to seventy-sixth sessions, and decides to organize another briefing at the seventy-seventh session with a view to furthering discussion on measures that could be taken to help to ensure the accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission and prevent future crimes;

17. *Recognizes* the efforts of Member States towards devising concrete proposals to ensure the accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission, and encourages all Member States to redouble their efforts informally during the intersessional period, with the support of the Secretariat, in particular through the organization of informal briefings;

18. *Requests* the Secretary-General to bring credible allegations that reveal that a crime may have been committed by a United Nations official or expert on mission to the attention of the States against whose nationals such allegations are

made and to request from those States updates, as set out in paragraph 20 below, on the status of their efforts to investigate and, as appropriate, prosecute crimes of a serious nature, as well as the types of appropriate assistance that States may wish to receive from the Secretariat for the purposes of such investigations and prosecutions;

19. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to seek, from all States that have notified the United Nations with respect to investigations or prosecutions of crimes allegedly committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission, updates on the status of their investigations or prosecutions, provided that this would not prejudice national investigations or national proceedings;

20. *Urges* the States referred to in paragraphs 18 and 19 above to provide to the Secretary-General periodic updates on their handling of the allegations, in order to demonstrate that Member States are taking steps to ensure accountability for crimes committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission, in particular by informing the Secretary-General of whether any disciplinary or criminal proceedings have been brought and of the outcome of any such proceedings or the reasons for not initiating them, provided that this would not be contrary to national laws or prejudice national investigations or national proceedings, and requests the Secretary-General to continue and undertake the necessary follow-up with the States concerned, by all appropriate forms of communication, with a view to encouraging those States to respond;

21. *Encourages* all States to provide to the Secretary-General a point of contact in order to strengthen and enable efficient communication and cooperation between the United Nations and Member States, and requests the Secretary-General to maintain and update a list of points of contact;

22. *Requests* the United Nations, when its investigations into allegations suggest that crimes of a serious nature may have been committed by United Nations officials or experts on mission, to consider any appropriate measures that may facilitate the possible use of information and material for purposes of criminal proceedings initiated by States, bearing in mind due process considerations;

23. *Encourages* the United Nations, when allegations against United Nations officials or experts on mission are determined by a United Nations administrative investigation to be unfounded, to take appropriate measures, in the interests of the Organization, to restore the credibility and the reputation of such officials and experts on mission;

24. *Urges* the United Nations to continue to cooperate with States exercising jurisdiction in order to provide them, within the framework of the relevant rules of international law and agreements governing activities of the United Nations, with information and material for purposes of criminal proceedings initiated by States;

25. *Recalls* the Secretary-General's bulletin on protection against retaliation for reporting misconduct and for cooperating with duly authorized audits or investigations,[17] underlines the importance of a culture in which individuals are encouraged and supported by the Organization to report alleged crimes, emphasizes that the United Nations, in accordance with the applicable rules of the Organization, should take no action that would retaliate against or intimidate United Nations officials and experts on mission who report allegations concerning crimes of a serious nature committed by United Nations officials and experts on mission, and stresses the need for appropriate safeguards against retaliation;

26. *Stresses* the critical importance of ensuring that victims of criminal conduct perpetrated by United Nations officials and experts on mission are made

[17] ST/SGB/2017/2/Rev.1.

aware of available victim assistance and support, including from a gender perspective, and requests the Secretary-General to report to the Sixth Committee on available victim assistance and support during the briefing at its seventy-seventh session;

27. *Takes note with appreciation* of the information provided by Governments in response to its resolutions 62/63, 63/119, 64/110, 65/20, 66/93, 67/88, 68/105, 69/114, 70/114, 71/134, 72/112, 73/196, 74/181 and 75/132, and urges Governments to continue to take the measures necessary for the implementation of those resolutions, including their provisions addressing the establishment of jurisdiction over crimes, particularly those of a serious nature, as known in their existing national criminal laws, committed by their nationals while serving as United Nations officials or experts on mission, as well as cooperation among States, and to provide specific details thereon, in particular with respect to paragraph 10 above, in the information provided to the Secretary-General;

28. *Recalls its request* in resolution 75/132 for Governments to provide specific details on the measures taken, as necessary, for the implementation of its resolutions 62/63, 63/119, 64/110, 65/20, 66/93, 67/88, 68/105, 69/114, 70/114, 71/134, 72/112, 73/196 and 74/181, and notes that, in response to those resolutions, 171 submissions and 18 questionnaire responses were received from 68 Member States between 6 December 2007 and 1 September 2021;

29. *Requests* the Secretary-General to keep up to date the online compilation of the full submissions and questionnaire responses as well as the online summary table of national provisions, based on information received from Member States since 2007, regarding the establishment of jurisdiction over their nationals whenever they serve as United Nations officials or experts on mission, in relation to crimes as known in their existing national criminal laws, particularly those of a serious nature, and also requests the Secretary-General to prepare a report containing a general overview of national provisions, based on the information received, for the seventy-seventh session of the General Assembly, provided that sufficient information has been received from Member States;

30. *Takes note* of the report of the Secretary-General setting out updates to all relevant existing policies and procedures of the United Nations system regarding the allegations referred to in paragraphs 18 and 19 above,[18] and requests the Secretary-General to continue to report on any updates to those policies and procedures and to develop recommendations to help to ensure that such policies and procedures relating to the reporting, investigation, referral and follow-up of credible allegations revealing that a crime may have been committed by a United Nations official or expert on mission are coherent, systematic and coordinated throughout the United Nations system;

31. *Requests* the Secretary-General to report to the General Assembly at its seventy-seventh session on the implementation of the present resolution, in particular with respect to paragraphs 10, 12, 13, 15, 18, 20 and 30 above, as well as any practical problems in its implementation, on the basis of information received from Governments and the Secretariat;

32. *Also requests* the Secretary-General to continue to improve reporting methods and expand the scope of reporting by providing information on the allegations referred to in paragraphs 18 and 19 above, as well as information received pursuant to paragraph 20 since 1 July 2007, limited to the United Nations entity involved, the year of referral, the dates and methods of follow-up requests from the Secretary-General, information about the type of crime and a summary of allegations, the status of investigations, prosecutorial and disciplinary actions taken, including

[18] A/76/205.

with respect to individuals concerned who have left the duty mission or the service of the United Nations, any requests for waivers of immunity, as applicable, and information on jurisdictional, evidentiary or other obstacles to prosecution, while protecting the privacy of the victims as well as respecting the privacy and rights of those subject to the allegations;

33. *Decides* to include in the provisional agenda of its seventy-seventh session the item entitled "Criminal accountability of United Nations officials and experts on mission".