

13 August 2015

Secretary-General's remarks to Security Council consultations on the situation in the Central African Republic

Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I come before the Security Council with a heavy heart and a heavy obligation – the duty to speak to you in clear and forthright terms about a cancer in our system that is doing grave harm to the lives of the people we are meant to protect and serve.

As you know, in the last months we have learned of serious allegations of grievous misconduct, including deeply troubling cases concerning United Nations troops in the Central African Republic.

I cannot express strongly enough my distress and shame over reports of sexual exploitation and the abuse of power by UN forces, police or civilian personnel.

Even a single allegation represents a serious strike at our institution.

Our first concern is with the victims and those at risk.

We must also bear in mind the profound damage done to credibly carry out the mandates entrusted to us by this very Council.

With respect to the allegations and cases in the Central African Republic, the time had come for a strong signal that leaders will be held responsible.

This is why I asked for the resignation of General Babacar Gaye despite his long and illustrious service to the United Nations.

An effective response demands accountability -- individual, leadership, command level, as well as accountability by the Organization and by Member States.

In the case of peacekeeping missions, accountability begins at the top, with the Special Representative of the Secretary-General, and carries through each level of management and command.

This morning, I convened an extraordinary meeting of my Special Representative, Force Commanders and Police Commissioners in all 16 peacekeeping missions to send the unequivocal message that they are obligated – every day and every night – to enforce the highest standards of conduct for all.

Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

I have addressed the Security Council numerous times on the challenge of rooting out sexual exploitation and abuse, including on 19 June 2008.

As I said at that time, zero tolerance “means zero complacency... it means zero impunity. When allegations are found to have merit, all personnel -- whether military, police or civilians -- are held accountable...[but that accountability also extends to] supervisors up the chain of command.”

This is what we mean by institutional responsibility.

Since then, I have worked with dedicated colleagues across the system and around the world to address this problem.

Three years ago, I strengthened indicators of performance for conduct and discipline, including timelines for referrals for investigations and referrals for disciplinary actions by peacekeeping missions. I also instituted annual quality assurance exercises.

Two years ago, I established a risk management framework for assessing and mitigating risks of sexual exploitation and abuse, as well as a model victim assistance mapping framework.

Last year, I issued an Accountability Framework and put in place quarterly and annual reporting on conduct and discipline from peacekeeping missions. I also expanded vetting of prospective peacekeeping personnel to include individually recruited military and police officers and

corrections officers.

In addition, my 2014 report on Special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and sexual abuse detailed more than 40 proposals to further strengthen action across prevention, enforcement and remedial action.

This report was adopted by the General Assembly in May of this year. We are actively working on implementation, including by:

- establishing Immediate Response Teams in peacekeeping missions to gather and preserve evidence for use in investigations;
 - adopting strict timelines for completion of investigations of sexual exploitation and abuse and calling on Member States to adhere to the same timeline;
 - developing a complaint reception framework to ensure mechanisms within communities where people can come forward, in confidence, to raise complaints regarding United Nations personnel;
 - strengthening administrative measures which may be imposed against staff members found to have committed these acts, including by withholding entitlements; and
 - suspending payments to troop or police-contributing countries in connection with suspects on the basis of credible evidence.
- establishing a trust fund to provide support and assistance to victims, complainants and children born as a result of sexual exploitation and abuse

Madame President,

Despite these and other efforts, abuses continue.

I know you share my outrage.

I know you share my anger.

I ask that you share my resolve.

Strong words must be matched by decisive actions.

As I said yesterday, I cannot do it alone.

Sexual exploitation and abuse by troops is a global scourge. This is not restricted to any one region, mission or person. This is a challenge for all forces, whether serving under the UN flag or not.

Some of the most soul-haunting abuses in the Central African Republic took place before the arrival of UN troops.

But I believe that United Nations must lead.

In that real sense, I rely on Member States.

Troop contributing countries provide the forces that risk their lives every day for the values of the United Nations.

Yet, by not responding to allegations quickly, responsibly or thoroughly, the work of thousands can be upended by the indecent acts of a few.

It is time to ask individually as Member States – and collectively as an institution – are we doing enough to report misconduct and punish those responsible?

I must speak candidly.

The answer is no.

Too many incidents go unreported.

Too few cases are prosecuted.

Too often, justice is denied.

It is critical that Troop Contributing Countries take swift action to appoint national investigation officers, conclude investigations and hold perpetrators accountable.

It is squarely their responsibility to ensure justice and to communicate to the Secretariat the results of their actions.

All too often this is not done quickly enough – and in the most frustrating cases, it is not done at all.

When the Secretariat does receive information about the actions taken in substantiated cases of sexual exploitation and abuse, I am frustrated by what appear to be far too lenient sanctions for such grave acts affecting men, women and, all too often, children.

13 August 2015 - The RINJ Foundation UN Grievous Misconduct - Rape

A failure to pursue criminal accountability for sexual crimes is tantamount to impunity. That injustice is a second blow to the victims – and a tacit pass for the crimes we are trying so hard to end.

As you know, I have proposed that my report next year to the General Assembly include countryspecific

information on credible allegations that are being investigated.

I also propose that sexual exploitation and abuse and other misconduct be placed on the agenda of the meetings of the Security Council with the troop-contributing countries and that the Council reviews follow-on action on all reported cases.

Madame President, Excellencies, Ladies and gentlemen,

Even one case of sexual exploitation and abuse erodes the trust of the most vulnerable population we are sent to safeguard.

Let us pledge to do more – much more – together to protect civilians and uphold the values of the United Nations.

Finally, I would like to add that following the usual consultations, I have sent a letter to the Security Council today conveying my intention to name Mr. Parfait Onanga-Anyanga from Gabon as my Acting Special Representative to ensure continuity of leadership in MINUSCA.

Mr. Onanga-Anyanga will take his new functions in Bangui early next week.

Thank you.