

Note to Correspondents: Press release for the High Level Meeting on the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse

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UNITED NATIONS, New York – Monday, 18 September 2017

United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres today called on world leaders, heads of international and regional organizations, and key civil society partners to stand with him in solidarity to condemn the scourge of sexual exploitation and abuse. Through this extraordinary demonstration of political commitment, the Member States and the United Nations commit themselves to measurably improve the Organisation's effectiveness in preventing sexual exploitation and abuse and pledge to put the rights and dignity of victims at the centre of their efforts.

Speaking at an unprecedented High-Level Meeting in New York, the Secretary-General stressed that sexual exploitation and abuse is a global menace from which no country, institution, or family is immune. In his introduction to the high level meeting, the Secretary-General noted that *"It is a moral and organizational imperative to put an end to sexual exploitation and abuse"*.

The Secretary-General and speakers representing major contributors to UN operations noted that peacekeeping is a flagship enterprise of our Organization and the vast majority of civilian and uniform carry out their duties with professionalism and pride, often under challenging and often dangerous circumstances. Today's high level meeting stands in testimony to the recognition that even a single case of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations personnel -- charged with protecting and assisting the world's most vulnerable -- inflicts deep personal wounds on victims and sullies the high purpose of the Organisation. Both Jean-Paul Lacroix, head of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, and Mr. Atul Khare underscored this message in their preparations leading up to the gathering. *"We cannot allow the unspeakable acts of a few to cause irreversible harm and sully the work of thousands of men and women who uphold the values enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations with pride and honour, often at great personal risk and sacrifice,"* noted Mr. Khare in his remarks at the session.

The meeting, which brought together Heads of States and Government, Ministers, Ambassadors, heads of international organisations, and civil society partners on the eve of the General Assembly, provided an unprecedented opportunity to demonstrate the solidarity of the international community, at the highest political levels, in condemning and combatting this scourge, ending impunity, ensuring accountability, and pursuing justice for victims.

The Secretary-General also welcomed Mr. Miroslav Lajčák, President of the General Assembly, and four Heads of State and government from troop contributing countries (Mr. Sauli Niinistö, President of the Republic of Finland; Mr. Tabaré Vasquez, President of the Oriental Republic of Uruguay ; Sheikh

Hasina, Prime Minister of the People's Republic of Bangladesh, and Mr. Hailemariam Desalegn, Prime Minister of the Federal Democratic Republic of Ethiopia) to share their views and best practices on how to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse.

The event highlighted the key initiatives at the heart of the Secretary-General's victim-centred approach to address sexual exploitation and abuse across the UN system:

1. The appointment of a system-wide Victims' Rights Advocate, Ms. Jane Connors (Australia). Ms. Connors noted in her remarks that she will work closely with governments and members of civil society to ensure that assistance is rapidly delivered to victims and that access to and information on national judicial processes is made available to victims. "I aim, in partnership with all stakeholders, to ... identify best practices which should craft a consistent, transparent, gender and child sensitive focus on victims," Ms. Connors told the audience.
2. The Under-Secretary-General for Field Support, Mr. Atul Khare, recognized the commitment of Member States to the Trust Fund in support of Victims of sexual exploitation and abuse (see Annex for the current list of members). He also announced the Secretary-General's new initiative to create a Voluntary Compact between the United Nations and Member States, which includes specific commitments to combat and prevent sexual exploitation and abuse in operational areas.
3. The Secretary-General thanked Member States for their contributions to the Victims' Trust Fund and formally marked the establishment of his Circle of Leadership on the prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations. This initiative serves as a visible demonstration of commitment and resolve at the highest levels of government across the Member States to end impunity, strengthen measures to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse, and give the victims the justice and assistance they deserve.

The Secretary-General also invited key non-governmental partners to the High-Level Meeting to collaborate with the United Nations in this effort, recognizing the important role of civil society in protecting vulnerable groups from acts of sexual exploitation and abuse. The Secretary-General encouraged civil society and humanitarian organizations to work more closely with the United Nations, as there is so much to gain from closer interaction and collective efforts on the ground to strengthen preventative and responsive measures.

Together, united in common purpose and interconnected in multi-stakeholder partnerships, the Organization, Member States and civil society members can be an unstoppable force to make zero tolerance of sexual exploitation and abuse a reality

### **Annex: Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations**

As of 18 Sept 2017, 57 Heads of State or Government have accepted the Secretary-General's invitation and have joined the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations operations.

The list is still open, Heads of State or Government may continue to sign up.

33 Heads of State (hereafter position in bold)

24 Heads of Government

#### **Acceptances:**

1. Commonwealth of **Australia**, Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull
2. Republic of **Austria**, **President** Alexander van der Bellen
3. People's Republic of **Bangladesh**, Prime Minister Sheikh Hasina\*
4. Kingdom of **Belgium**, Prime Minister Charles Michel
5. Kingdom of **Bhutan**, Prime Minister Lyonchoen Tshering Tobgay
6. Plurinational State of **Bolivia**, **President** Evo Morales Ayma
7. The Federative Republic of **Brazil**, President Michel Temer\*
8. Republic of **Bulgaria**, **President** Rumen Radev
9. **Burkina Faso**, **President** Roch Marc Chrisian Kaboré\*
10. Republic of **Cape Verde**, Prime Minister José Ulisses Correia e Silva
11. Kingdom of **Cambodia**, Prime Minister Samdech Akka Moha Sena Padei Techo Hun Sen
12. **Canada**, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau
13. Union of the **Comoros**, **President** Azali Assoumali
14. Republic of **Côte d'Ivoire**, **President** Alassane Ouattara
15. Republic of **Cyprus**, **President** Nicos Anastasiades
16. Kingdom of **Denmark**, Prime Minister Lars Løkke Rasmussen
17. **Dominican Republic**, **President** Danilo Medina Sánchez
18. Arab Republic of **Egypt**, **President** Abdel Fattah Al Sisi\*
19. Republic of **Estonia**, **President** Kersti Kaljulaid
20. Federal Democratic Republic of **Ethiopia**, Prime Minister Hailemariam Desalegn\*
21. Republic of **Fiji**, Prime Minister Josaia Voreqe Bainimarama
22. Republic of **Finland**, **President** Sauli Niinistö
23. **French** Republic, **President** Emmanuel Macron
24. Federal Republic of **Germany**, Chancellor Angela Merkel
25. Republic of **Ghana**, **President** Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo\*
26. **Iceland**, Prime Minister Bjarni Benediktsson
27. Republic of **Ireland**, Taoiseach Leo Varadkar
28. **Italian** Republic, **President** Sergio Mattarella
29. **Japan**, Prime Minister Shinzo Abe
30. Republic of **Kenya**, **President** Uhuru Kenyatta
31. Kingdom of **Lesotho**, Prime Minister Thomas Motsoahae Thabane
32. Republic of **Lithuania**, **President** Dalia Grybauskaitė
33. **Malaysia**, Prime Minister Dato' Sri Haji Mohd Najib bin Tun Haji Abdul Razak
34. **Malawi**, **President** Peter Mutharika
35. Kingdom of **Morocco**, **King** Mohammed VI\*
36. Kingdom of the **Netherlands**, Prime Minister Mark Rutte
37. Federal Republic of **Nigeria**, **President** Muhammadu Buhari\*
38. Kingdom of **Norway**, Prime Minister Erna Solberg
39. Republic of **Panama**, **President** Juan Carlos Varela Rodríguez
40. Republic of **Portugal**, Prime Minister António Luís Santos da Costa
41. Republic of Korea, **President** Moon Jae-in
42. Republic of **Rwanda**, **President** Paul Kagame\*
43. **Saint Lucia**, Prime Minister Allen Michael Chastanet
44. Republic of **Senegal**, **President** Macky Sall\*
45. **Slovak** Republic, **President** Andrej Kiska
46. Republic of **Slovenia**, Prime Minister Miro Cerar
47. Republic of **South Africa**, **President** Jacob Zuma\*
48. Kingdom of **Spain**, Prime Minister Mariano Rajoy Brey

49. Democratic Socialist Republic of **Sri Lanka**, **President** Maithripala Sirisena
  50. Confederation of **Switzerland**, **President** Doris Leuthard
  51. The former **Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia**, Prime Minister Zoran Zaev
  52. **Togolese** Republic, **President** Faure Essozimna Gnassingbé\*
  53. Republic of **Uganda**, Prime Minister Ruhakana Rugunda
  54. **United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland**, Prime Minister Theresa May
  55. **United States of America**, **President** Donald J. Trump
  56. Oriental Republic of **Uruguay**, **President** Tabaré Vázquez\*
  57. Republic of **Zambia**, **President** Edgar Chagwa Lungu
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#### **Number of countries by Regions:**

African Group: 18

Asia Pacific Group: 9

Eastern European Group: 6

Latin American and Caribbean Group: 6

Western European and Others Group: 18

#### **From top 10 financial contributing countries to the regular budget (9):**

U.S.A., Japan, UK, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, France and Canada

#### **From top 10 contributors to assessed contributions to UN peacekeeping budget (9):**

U.S.A., Japan, UK, Germany, Italy, the Netherlands, Norway, France and Canada

#### **Top 20 troop contributing countries (13):**

Bangladesh, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Egypt, Ethiopia, Ghana, Morocco, Nigeria, Rwanda, Senegal, South Africa, Togo, Uruguay

Note: \* Top 20 TCCs/PCCs

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