

**72<sup>nd</sup> session of the Executive Committee of the High Commissioner's  
Programme (4 – 8 October 2021)**

**3. General debate**

**Joint Statement of the Geneva group of friends to eliminate sexual  
harassment**

Thank you Chair,

I am pleased to deliver this statement on behalf of the Geneva Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment.

This Group of Friends is a member state-led platform designed to spur discussions and coordinate actions in different multilateral fora towards the elimination of sexual harassment as well as sexual exploitation and abuse, and to support ongoing efforts by international organizations, agencies and programmes in Geneva in this regard. We seek to promote awareness, prompt policies, and support effective follow-up throughout the UN system through collective activities including events, advocacy and collaboration among stakeholders. We invite other member states to join this Group and work together towards the eradication of sexual harassment and sexual exploitation and abuse.

With over 18,000 staff and affiliated workforce based primarily in the field, in permanent and direct contact with people in vulnerable situations, UNHCR is one of the biggest and most operational UN agencies. Furthermore, UNHCR operates in environments shaped by

significant power differentials and deeply rooted inequalities, including gender inequalities, in which the conditions that can give rise to sexual misconduct exist. Therefore we welcome the clear position as set out by High Commissioner Filippo Grandi, that: sexual misconduct is unjustifiable and must be eradicated from the operations of the Organization.

We welcome UNHCR's [Strategy and Action Plan 2020-2022](#) and we are looking forward to its renewal. The prompt investigation of all reported cases of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment is vital, while maintaining a victim and survivor-centered approach and a human rights and gender perspectives. We urge UNHCR to continue ensuring appropriate disciplinary action, where allegations are substantiated, and keep working closely with IASC partners and the CEB Taskforce for the developing of effective tools / mechanisms that prevent re-employment of transgressors.

We thank the Inspector General's Office for the presentation of its [Report](#) that includes its activities for investigating cases of sexual misconduct, implicating both UNHCR and partner personnel. We are looking forward to the finalization of the announced e-learning package on investigative processes and its distribution to a wide audience and IASC partners.

At the same time, prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse and of sexual harassment remain key issues. We urge UNHCR to continue conducting training and awareness-raising on sexual misconduct and keep up with its organizational culture change efforts. The network of 400 focal points in UNHCR's field offices is a key component in helping identify and support victims and survivors. With regards to the latter, we

welcome UNHCR's strong leadership which sets the tone from the top. We encourage UNHCR continue to make sufficient resources available to the IGO and its work.

We thank the High Commissioner for his work as Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) Champion on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment in 2019-2020. We also appreciate the leadership of Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees, Ms. Kelly T. Clements, as interim Chair of the CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment. We urge UNHCR to continue their strong interagency engagement, and appeal to all UN-organisations to develop a joint approach when it comes to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including on investigations. We invite UNHCR to engage further with the ExCom Member States and keep them fully and regularly informed of UNHCR efforts to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment.

We know that UNHCR personnel works tirelessly, working in difficult environments, sometimes risking their own safety and well-being. That's why GOFESH member states will be by your side, to help ensuring that all personnel, their partners and the people they care for co-exist in dignity and complete safety from any kind of sexual misconduct.

Thank you

## **Geneva group of friends to eliminate sexual harassment**

1. Albania
2. Argentina
3. Australia
4. Austria
5. Brazil
6. Canada
7. Colombia
8. Costa Rica
9. Croatia
10. Cyprus
11. Ecuador
12. Estonia
13. Fiji
14. France
15. Gambia
16. Georgia
17. Greece
18. Guatemala
19. Ireland
20. Israel
21. Kenya
22. Latvia
23. Liechtenstein
24. Malta
25. Mexico
26. Monaco
27. Montenegro
28. Morocco
29. Netherlands
30. North Macedonia
31. Norway
32. Panama
33. Republic of Korea
34. Senegal
35. Spain
36. Thailand
37. United Kingdom
38. United States