

## CL 159/8 - Information Note

### FAO Action Plan for the Prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment

#### I. Introduction

1. FAO does not tolerate harassment in any of its forms and is committed to ensuring a work environment that is free of harassment. FAO has implemented the Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority (Administrative Circular 2015/3).
2. Furthermore, on 21 February 2018, Administrative Circular 2018/02 was issued to reiterate that at FAO “complaints of harassment, in particular sexual harassment (SH), and of sexual exploitation or abuse (SEA), are taken very seriously and may be made in strict confidence” and that “it is incumbent upon all employees, and in particular managers of organizational units, to create and promote a work ethos and environment that prevents sexual harassment, exploitation or abuse.”
3. Based on these policies, FAO implements series of measures against SH and SEA, centering on critical areas of prevention, reporting, investigation, redressal mechanisms, and protection of victims.
4. These measures are presented in this Summary Action Plan, which constitutes the concerted action that the Organization is taking or intends to take on this respect.

#### II. Purpose

5. This Action Plan stems from the need to put into effect the Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority, issued in 2015. FAO applies a zero-tolerance policy towards Sexual Exploitation and abuse and does not tolerate harassment in any of its forms.
6. A true zero-tolerance policy requires not only good intentions, but also a robust system enabling fair investigations, observing principles of confidentiality and discretion, and guarantying ongoing protection of those who report.
7. Within this framework, the Action Plan is intended in particular to clarify the key areas of work and the concrete actions which are essential to be set up in order to ensure total enforcement of the rules aimed at creating and promoting a working environment that prevents sexual harassment, sexual exploitation and abuse.

#### III. Alignment with UN Initiatives

8. In November 2017, the UN Secretary-General, reiterating his zero-tolerance policy and commitment to ensure maximum attention and enhanced counteraction approach across the United Nations system, established a Task Force of leaders for the purpose of reviewing policies to address and prevent sexual harassment.

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9. In line with this, the Action Plan is set to comply with the initiatives and proposals introduced by the UN Chief Executive Board (CEB), along with the work currently being performed by the Task Force, in which FAO is actively participating, to align with the common and consistent approach to sexual harassment across the UN (see Annex I).

#### **IV. Corporate Policies and Procedures**

10. The relevant FAO corporate policies and procedures in the area of Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority are promulgated by the Administrative Circulars:

- a) Policy on the Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of Authority – 2015;
- b) Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Sexual Abuse (PSEA) – 2013;
- c) Whistleblower Protection Policy – 2011.

#### **V. Audience and Beneficiaries**

11. The direct audience for the Action Plan is all FAO staff and employees at headquarters and in field locations to guide them in addressing SH and SEA in all their activities at all levels of the Organization.

12. The Action Plan can also be of interest to other relevant stakeholders including UN staff, development partners and civil society organizations. A communication strategy for the Action Plan aims to promote implementation by FAO staff, and among its strategies are regular briefings for managers as well as a brochure explaining the Action Plan's aims and modalities.

#### **VI. Areas of Work**

13. Sexual harassment results from a culture of discrimination and privilege, based on unequal gender relations and power dynamics. It has no place in FAO and the United Nations system as a whole.

14. The Action Plan focuses in three key areas of work:

##### **Reporting**

- a) Conduct targeted Perception Survey for FAO personnel, aligned to the CEB TF/SH efforts to ensure timely and accurate reporting and evidence-based policy making;
- b) Enhance Hotline/Helpline reporting capabilities (multilingual/outourcing considerations on piggyback proposal with UN counterparts);
- c) Establish mechanism to regularly monitor implementing partners accountability and adherence to FAO standards;
- d) Improve Community Based Complaint Mechanism;
- e) Establish and maintain confidential database by PSEA Focal point network of all SEA reports received;
- f) Sexual Harassment Screening Database established in collaboration with the CEB TF/SH.

##### **Investigation and decision-making**

- a) Increase investigative capacity by addition of one Professional position in OIG;
- b) Strengthen network with peers in the humanitarian sector (RBA, IASC webinars) to share experiences and good practices.

### **Outreach and support**

- a) Establish training programme on SEA and SH for all FAO personnel, including mandatory e-learning curriculum, face-to-face-training and annual refresher courses;
- b) Raise awareness on SEA and SH for all FAO personnel;
- c) Short Guide for Managers on Prevention of and Response to SH in the Workplace, once designed by CEB/SH to be distributed to managers in FAO;
- d) Brochures and posters on SEA and SH to be designed and distributed;
- e) Reinforced internal communications on SEA/SH.

15. As highlighted by CEB task force action in FAO is being accelerated, but much more needs to be done: FAO like other Organizations of the UN system need to ensure that there is no place for informal cultures of silence and permissiveness that provide the breeding ground for sexual harassment; to remove existing obstacles that stand in the way of holding perpetrators to account and properly protect and assist victims of sexual harassment; to scale up prevention and response efforts; to strengthen investigative capacity; and to create a diverse, inclusive and respectful working environment, where all staff are equally valued and treated with dignity. It is against this background that this high level action plan has been developed. It is supported by more detailed and time bound deliverables with designation of responsibilities for internal management purpose.

## **CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment in the Organizations of the UN System – Update April 2018**

Harassment of any type is antithetical to the principles of the United Nations. Sexual harassment, in particular, is the manifestation of a culture of discrimination and privilege based on unequal gender relations and other power dynamics.

At its 2017 session, the CEB established a CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the organizations of the United Nations System, chaired by the Chair of the HLCM. Intensive work has taken place over the last months with the Task Force focusing on how the system can most rapidly scale up prevention and response efforts, to protect and support victims, to strengthen investigative capacity and to create an enabling working environment.

The Task Force is driving a series of priority initiatives, with immediate action in five key areas:

1. Uniform definition: applying a uniform definition of sexual harassment consistently.
2. Harmonizing policy: Developing common principles applicable to all UN system organizations, and strengthening investigative capacity.
3. Screening system: Establishing a UN system-wide screening database to avoid rehire of individuals whose working relationship with an organization of the system ended because of a determination that they perpetrated sexual harassment.
4. Evidence for action: Collecting and analyzing data across the UN system so that reporting is timely and accurate, and policy is firmly based on the best available evidence.
5. Outreach tools: Developing awareness-raising, communication and outreach tools, including a common Guide for Managers.

The recommendations of the Task Force were presented to the High Level Committee on Management at its meeting on 13 April 2018 for review, guidance and input.

Action has been accelerated, but much more needs to be done: Organizations of the UN system need to dismantle informal cultures of silence and permissiveness that provide the breeding ground for sexual harassment; to remove existing obstacles that stand in the way of holding perpetrators to account and properly protect and assist victims of sexual harassment; to scale up prevention and response efforts; to strengthen investigative capacity; and to create a diverse, inclusive and respectful working environment, where all staff are equally valued and treated with dignity.

The Task Force will continue its work, with a view to presenting its conclusions at the Board's fall 2018 session, focusing on the following priorities:

- Finalization and adoption of a UN System Sexual Harassment Policy Reference Model;
- Development of a mechanism for system-wide collection and analysis of data to ensure timely and accurate reporting and evidence-based policy making;
- Expansion of the screening system to include individuals with pending allegations of sexual harassment who leave the organization before the completion of the process.
- Development of proposals to strengthen investigative capacity;
- Preparation of a proposal for common approach on sexual harassment helplines/hotlines; and,
- Development of awareness-raising, communication and outreach tools on prevention of, and response to sexual harassment in the workplace.