

CEB TASK FORCE ON ADDRESSING SEXUAL  
HARASSMENT WITHIN THE ORGANIZATIONS OF  
THE UNITED NATIONS SYSTEM

**Workplan 2020-2021**



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## Introduction

The Secretary-General and UN system leaders have committed to instilling a zero-tolerance approach to sexual harassment, to strengthening victim-centred prevention and response, and to fostering a safe, equal and inclusive working environment across the UN system<sup>1</sup>. The CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within United Nations System Organizations (Task Force) was established in 2017 by the Secretary-General to develop a common United Nations system approach towards sexual harassment through reviewing organizations' policies for addressing sexual harassment, and their capacities for the investigation of allegations and support to victims.

In the first three years of its existence the Task Force has focused on establishing relevant policies, ensuring accountability, enhancing personnel awareness and increasing trust in the Organization, and fostering constructive dialogue. This includes pursuing closer coordination between investigatory bodies to harmonise standards, aligning methods, ensuring consistency, strengthening capacities throughout the aid sector, and integrating a victim-centred approach. The Task Force has made substantial progress in the areas of policy, accountability, support and outreach and strengthening investigations<sup>2</sup> and has developed relevant products such as the [UN system Model Policy on Sexual Harassment](#), the screening database "[Clear Check](#)", a [guide for managers](#) to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the workplace and [the Code of Conduct to Prevent Harassment Including Sexual Harassment at UN System Events](#).

It is however clear that more effort is still needed to ensure the United Nations is a workplace where sexual harassment is never tolerated, abusers are held accountable, personnel feels safe to report incidents, and victims receive the support and assistance they need. The latter is especially important given the greater understanding, three years into this effort, of a victim-centred approach. Survey data has shown that the number of complaints has increased in recent years, and that women overwhelmingly remain the target of sexual harassment and men are overwhelmingly the perpetrators, within UN system organizations.

The need to do more on driving cultural change within individual UN organizations, and the UN system as a whole, has become even more clear in recent months throughout the COVID-19 Pandemic. With that context in mind, priorities in the next phase of the Task Force will therefore include implementation and monitoring of the above deliverables by HLCM members, the development and piloting of training and learning materials, external engagement with key stakeholders and partners, the strengthening of a victim-centred approach, and the broader promotion of culture change throughout the organization.

The latter is important given a couple of key dynamics which have emerged in the three years since the establishment of the Task Force. The first is the COVID-19 pandemic, which has brought additional questions related to abuse of authority and harassment in the context of widescale teleworking, remote working and blended office arrangements. This raises a variety of questions including the boundaries of workplace misconduct and potential difficulties for victims to access assistance and support through their employer. The second is race, diversity and inclusion, which has been subject to considerable discussion in recent months.

Although not within scope of the Task Force, the membership of the Task Force has recognized that it has an important role to play in addressing these rising challenges and that some of the Task Force's approaches

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<sup>1</sup> [CEB Statement on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN System](#)

<sup>2</sup> [CEB Task Force on Sexual Harassment Factsheet July 2020](#)

need to be adapted accordingly. This is especially true when looking at long-term culture change and root causes such as abuse of authority and power imbalances.

The present document sets out a workplan<sup>3</sup> for the Task Force to address these challenges and to move forward on efforts to eradicate sexual harassment and create safe, inclusive and equal working environments across the UN system. The Task Force will work towards objectives through actions identified below. The High-Level Committee on Management adopted the current workplan at its second regular session of 2020.

## 1. Implement: Support the roll-out of products endorsed by HLCM

### Objective:

#### **Rollout common tools and establish baselines for implementation within the UN system**

#### Actions:

- 1.1. Develop a light monitoring framework to track the rollout of the UN system Model Policy on Sexual Harassment, usage of the Clear Check database, and of the guide for managers and Code of Conduct, to feed updates on progress with rollout in to the Task Force and to HLCM.
- 1.2. Establish a simplified online platform (e.g. using a corporate tool such as Microsoft Teams or Sharepoint) to provide centralized access to Task Force focal points for relevant documents and materials and serve as a platform for sharing of lessons learned as rollout continues. In addition to Task Force members, this platform might also be accessible to other partners.
- 1.3. Strengthen the Task Force's capacity in data collection, analysis and presentation through an assessment of available data and current analytical capacity within the different workstreams and subsequently propose improvements.

## 2. Strengthen: Advance a victim-centred approach to tackling sexual harassment

### Objective:

#### **Ensure a strengthened, consistent and victim-centred UN system approach to addressing sexual harassment**

#### Actions:

- 2.1. Finalize the Manual for the Investigation of Sexual Harassment and plan its guided dissemination to investigators and other audiences across the UN system through appropriate and effective channels.
- 2.2. Reassess the purpose of the annual survey on reporting of sexual harassment and how its results can provide consistent information across all agencies and lead to action by the system and individual agencies; and implement further refinements to the questionnaire based on that reassessment.

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<sup>3</sup> This workplan is not exhaustive and does not preclude taking forward other activities that arise.

- 2.3. Explore Task Force initiatives required to support a coherent and victim-centred approach to sexual harassment, taking into account the current work environment, including increased remote and online working arrangements.
  - 2.3.1. Develop a survey which takes into account victims' experiences. Victims would be invited to complete a survey at the end of the resolution process, which could then be shared, with all personal and organizational data removed, to the Task Force, which could then be used to inform future activities and action.
  - 2.3.2. Develop an agreed common understanding of a victim centred approach in cases of sexual harassment, with general principles that could help agencies in applying a victim centred approach in their own policies and procedures, including those relating to retaliation.

### 3. Learning and Communication

#### Objective:

**Raise awareness of the UN system approach to addressing sexual harassment and promote instruments to combat discrimination and harassment among internal audiences.**

#### Actions:

- 3.1. Develop an effective and proactive communications strategy to advance the Task Force's commitment to a harassment-free United Nations, targeting a broad internal audience, including senior managers, subject matter experts, and field personnel.
  - 3.1.1. Identify the most effective channels of communication adapted to UN system internal audiences, including different media and joint communications (e.g. systemwide campaigns).
  - 3.1.2. Determine which instruments developed by the Task Force are less well-known among UN system organizations, personnel and partners and ensure greater awareness of available Task Force resources, in particular in field locations, through intensified communication.
- 3.2. Develop training and awareness raising material on prevention and response to sexual harassment, including material suitable for the current work environment with an increased focus on online training and communication materials.

### 4. Outreach and Knowledge Sharing

#### Objective:

**Engage actors from within and outside of the UN system on issues of sexual harassment to better understand and strengthen approaches and actions to address sexual harassment.**

#### Actions:

- 4.1. Initiate and/or continue cooperation and coordination with actors and mechanisms inside- and outside of the UN system (e.g. the Inter-agency Standing Committee (IASC), the Network of Gender Focal Points in the UN system, the Development Cooperation Office (DCO),

intergovernmental mechanisms) to harness synergies, cross-fertilize and share knowledge and material to end sexual harassment.

- 4.2. Assess the current usage of the Clear Check database and based on the analysis strongly encourage the usage of the database by all UN system entities, target the further integration with organizational talent management systems and consider the possibility and practicability of expanding the database to organizations outside of the UN system.
- 4.3. Enhance targeted communication to select external audiences to disseminate information about the UN system's efforts to eradicate sexual harassment, including but not limited to periodical briefings to Member States.

## 5. Leadership and Culture

### Objective:

**Understand the workings, levers and entry points for organizational culture change to achieve a safe and inclusive work environment free of discrimination, including racial discrimination, and harassment**

### Actions:

- 5.1. Engage with and collect material from the Secretary-General's Senior Management Group (SMG), the CEB Task Force on the Future of the UN System Workforce, the IASC, and other relevant intra- and inter-agency groups and mechanisms to better understand ongoing work on the broader issues of harassment and discrimination, including racial discrimination, and on organizational culture change.
- 5.2. Identify actions and instruments – either new or existing - to advance an organizational culture that does not tolerate discrimination and harassment, with a focus on sexual harassment.
- 5.3. Hold a dedicated session of the Task Force on values, culture and attitudes, to provide the opportunity for individual reflection and actions that can be taken in the area of culture change and create safe, respectful and inclusive working environments.