



On Sexual Harassment

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

INITIATIVES AND PROGRESS FACTSHEET

Harassment of any type is antithetical to the principles of the UN, and sexual harassment in particular undermines its credibility, denies the principles of non-discrimination on the basis of sex and gender, and degrades its staff. The Secretary-General and UN system leaders committed to a zero-tolerance approach to tackling sexual harassment, to strengthening victim-centred prevention and response efforts, and fostering a safe, equal and inclusive working environment across the UN system. To realize these commitments, the UN System Chief Executives Board for Coordination (CEB) established in November 2017 the [CEB Task Force on Addressing Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN system \('Task Force'\)](#), chaired by the Vice-Chair of HLCM and Deputy High Commissioner for Refugees. The [Task Force has an updated workplan](#) for 2020/21, which, besides supporting the roll-out of HLCM-endorsed products, includes the establishments of four workstreams:

1. Advancing a victim-centred approach to tackling sexual harassment;
2. Learning and communication;
3. Outreach and knowledge sharing;
4. Leadership and culture.

A Task Force coordinator was appointed in 2020 to support the Chair on secretarial and substantial activities.

POLICY

INITIATIVE



STATUS

Uniform definition of "sexual harassment" and development of common principles representing 'best practices' to harmonize policy on sexual harassment across the UN system



Completed May 2018

Model Policy on Sexual Harassment



Approved HLCM October 2018 on behalf of CEB
Ongoing implementation at organization level

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Staff Perception Survey on sexual harassment to be conducted by independent provider across 31 entities	✓	Completed November 2018 Ongoing implementation of strategic responses
Monitoring of adoption of the Model Policy on Sexual Harassment	↻	Ongoing (last survey: February 2020, next first half of 2021) (Workstream 1)
Advancing a Common Understanding of a Victim-centred Approach to Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the United Nations System	↻	Under development (Workstream 2, expected first half of 2021)






ACCOUNTABILITY

INITIATIVE	→	STATUS
Launch of the system-wide screening database 'ClearCheck' to avoid rehire of individuals whose working relationship with an organization ended because of a finding they had perpetrated sexual harassment	✓	Completed June 2018
Expanded Guidelines for the Sexual Harassment Screening Database 'ClearCheck' to include pending allegations of sexual harassment to avoid re-hire of individuals whose employment with an organization ends while allegations are pending	✓	Completed October 2018
Expansion of ClearCheck features and integration with organisational talent management systems	↻	Ongoing (Workstream 4)
Administration of a system-wide questionnaire on improved reporting of sexual harassment in the UN system	✓	Completed (March 2019, April 2020)
	↻	Ongoing: Next questionnaire first half of 2021

Support and Outreach

INITIATIVE	→	STATUS
Common Guide for Managers to prevent and respond to sexual harassment in the workplace, including 'check list', as a tool for outreach and communication	✓	Completed May 2018, ongoing deployment at organization level
Development of a framework of various Hotlines/Helplines solutions with reference to best practices and deployment of different Hotlines/Helplines at organizational level	✓	Development completed April 2019; deployment ongoing in several entities

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Support to campaigns against sexual Harassment and for organizational change, including workplace civility		Ongoing
Development and promulgation of a Model Code of Conduct to Prevent Sexual Harassment During on Relation to UN Events		Completed and launched July 2019 Ongoing implementation at organization level
Staff training on sexual harassment at entity level, coordinated by the Task Force		Ongoing (Workstream 3)
Organization of learning dialogues with key stakeholders and other outreach activities		Ongoing (Workstream 4; last activity - Dialogue with UN Member States on Addressing Sexual Harassment, February 2021)
Development of a public online portal for outreach and communication		Under development (Workstream 4)

STRENGTHENING INVESTIGATIONS

INITIATIVE	→	STATUS
Prioritization of sexual harassment investigations		Ongoing at organization level
Recruitment of additional specialized sexual harassment investigators		Ongoing at organization level
Coordination of UN system investigations with Network of UN Representatives of Investigations Services (UN-RIS)		Ongoing
Coordination of the Task Force and Inter-Agency Standing Committee (IASC) members with heads of investigatory bodies		Ongoing Meetings: November 2018 / November 2019 Agreed to maintain joint forum IASC / CEB Task Force members
Development of guidance notes to UN decision makers when considering sexual harassment matters		Jurisprudence of Tribunals on Evidentiary Standards
		Assessment of Evidence and Credibility
		Summary Note on Disclosure of an Investigation Report
		Guidance on use of digital forensic evidence

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Development on Manual of Guidance for the Investigation of Sexual Harassment	✓	Completed March 2021
Development system-wide training programme for investigators	↻	Ongoing (under OIOS training programme)
Agreement on criteria for the selection of investigators tasked with investigating sexual harassment		
Recommendations for a uniform system for communicating with victims and other stakeholders	↻	Ongoing (finalisation expected shortly)
Development of guidance on investigations and disciplinary timelines		

Crosscutting strategies

Outreach & consultations

The Task Force continues to broaden its consultative process and engagement with stakeholders active and experienced in addressing sexual harassment including outreach to staff members, gender specialists, academics, NGOs and persons directly affected by sexual harassment. Consultations aim at seeking advice and highlighting best practices with a view to strengthening future system-wide efforts and have included outreach to the UN Ombudspersons, UN Feminists Network, UN Globe, UN Gender Focal Point Network, and the Inter-Agency Standing Committee humanitarian network. The Task Force has also developed support for the UN system's initiatives against sexual harassment in the broader community through partnerships, such as engagement with the Ambassadorial-level Group of Friends to Eliminate Sexual Harassment in New York.

Alignment with related UN policies

The UN's system-wide activities on sexual harassment take place in a broader context of social and cultural change around gender equality and women's empowerment, organizational change and UN system reform. These distinct but related activities are being implemented in parallel within the UN system, and close collaboration between the Task Force and these teams ensures the deliverables are mutually informed and enhanced:



Sexual harassment is fundamentally linked to unequal gender relations. The Secretary-General's [System-wide Strategy on Gender Parity](#), launched in September 2017, comprehensively provides targets and tools to ensure gender parity and empowerment of women and effect positive organizational change.



A safe and inclusive working environment is a prerequisite to addressing sexual harassment. The [Enabling Environment Guidelines for the UN system and](#), developed by the CEB HR Network, OHRM and UN Women, were published in March 2019 to provide guidance and best practices. The Guidelines were expanded in 2021 to include [Field-specific enabling environment guidelines](#). Contextually, the work of the CEB Task force is

deeply connected with [Occupational Safety and Health \(OSH\)](#), whose overarching aim is to promote a healthier, safer and more respectful workplace which necessarily includes considerations on sexual misconduct, as reflected in the [UN system Mental Health Strategy](#) and the [OSH Framework for Affiliate/Standby/non-UN personnel](#).



The issue of [sexual exploitation and abuse](#) is closely linked to the issue of sexual harassment. Cooperation between the Task Force and the UN Special Coordinator on Improving the UN Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and the UN Victims' Rights Advocate ensures mutual support between the two action plans.