

Background Note: Briefing to the Executive Board, Annual Session 2022

“Protection Against Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment”

I. Introduction

1. The prevention of and response to sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) and sexual harassment (SH), using a victim/survivor-centred approach, have been and continue to be of highest priority for UN Women. In February 2022, the entity provided the Executive Board with a comprehensive update of the progress achieved in tackling both forms of sexual misconduct within UN-Women, as well as of its engagement with UN system-wide initiatives (for details, see [Briefing Note to the Executive Board of UN-Women, First Regular Session](#)). Since then, UN-Women has continued to push to further improve its internal framework to effectively prevent and respond to SEA and SH and the operationalization thereof at HQ, regional and country offices levels. At the same time, it has continued to actively contribute to the system-wide work by leveraging its experience and expertise stemming from its triple mandate.
2. The Executive Board may wish to: (i) take note of the updates of UN-Women’s work to tackle sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment; and (ii) continue to support the entity’s ongoing strong commitment to address and eliminate sexual misconduct within UN-Women as well as across the UN system.

II. Key Updates

I. Progress to date

Operationalisation and coordination across UN Women and beyond.

3. Through its expanded network of 96 regional and in-country PSEA and SH focal points, UN-Women has not only continued to coordinate the effective implementation of its internal sexual misconduct prevention and response framework across UN-Women, but as of May 2022, the entity has also assumed the role of co-chair for the inter-agency PSEA networks in 8 countries, in line with its triple mandate. In the context of the Ukraine emergency response, an additional inter-agency network was established in Moldova to specifically address PSEA within its evolving refugee situation, which UN Women is also co-chairing together with UNHCR. UN-Women HQ has provided support to focal points for the fulfillment of their functions within these inter-agency settings, as well as for their UN Women internal responsibilities whenever needed, in addition to the sharing of best practices and the facilitation of peer exchanges via its Community of Practice. To ensure wider coordination as well as knowledge sharing specific to the prevention of and response to sexual harassment within the entity, UN Women’s internal taskforce on addressing

SH, thanks to its broadened membership, has been bringing together key stakeholders from across all of UN Women's geographical locations on a regular basis.

4. Additionally, in an effort to strengthen UN-wide PSEA and SH approaches, UN-Women also continued its active engagement with improvement efforts across the system, with the CEB taskforce on addressing sexual harassment being a prime example thereof. In this specific context, UN-Women's Deputy Executive Director for UN Coordination, Partnerships, Resources and Sustainability is co-leading the outreach and knowledge sharing efforts. In this capacity UN-Women has conducted several peer-to-peer learning dialogues to foster knowledge sharing amongst UN Member States, UN entities, civil society representatives, academia, and international organizations. The seventh dialogue will be held at the end of May 2022 and will focus particularly on addressing sexual harassment in the field. UN-Women continues to share good practice and recommendations from these dialogues with the international community, which are summarized in a [publication](#). Pending additional resources, UN Women will create a knowledge hub to foster knowledge sharing, transparency and efficiency amongst the UN system and external stakeholders. High quality inputs are also provided in the workings groups on advancing a victim-centred approach, learning and communication, and leadership and culture of the CEB taskforce on SH by UN-Women. Most recently this has included providing substantive feedback on a draft survey to be finalized, aiming at gathering victims'/survivors' experiences of using an entity's informal and/or formal institutional processes to address reports of sexual harassment, and in the UN system-wide Innovation Challenge on leadership and culture change, with eight shortlisted agencies to strengthen their approaches to end sexual harassment. In addition, UN-Women represents the network of nearly 500 Gender Focal Points in the CEB Task Force. UN Women is a key stakeholder in mainstreaming policies and guidance from this Task Force through its system-wide coordination and capacity-building for this network. Gender Focal Points further implement UN-Women's [Enabling Environment Guidelines for the UN System](#) and [Field-specific Enabling Environment Guidelines](#) in support of gender parity and an inclusive working environment free of harassment. Further, UN-Women works closely with the United Nations' Victim's Rights Advocate to advance and implement a victim/survivor-centered approach to sexual harassment in the UN system through the Gender Focal Points. Moreover, as a technical lead on ending violence against women (through its policy and norms and standards work) within the UN System, UN-Women is ensuring that all evidence-based policy and programming knowledge and guidance (including through Flagship Initiatives on Prevention and Essential Services, and Safe Cities and Safe Public Spaces) generated for global consumption is dually brought into UN internal processes.

5. To promote greater awareness and increased knowledge of PSEA and SH across the organization, UN-Women has been rolling out its scenario-based SEA and SH training workshops for all personnel, in close collaboration with its regional Human Resources Business Partners. Furthermore, to provide victim/survivor-centred assistance to any personnel affected by trauma from SEA and SH, UN Women's regional staff counsellors continued to be available for stress management and counselling support within the time zones and the languages most convenient for them, in addition to the services rendered by the UNDSS Critical Incident Stress Management Section as well as an external entity providing online counseling services.

Leadership, accountability and culture change.

6. In April 2022, UN Women undertook its annual PSEA and SH management certification exercise for its regional directors and country representatives to ensure organization-wide compliance with ST/SGB/2003/13 and UN Women's Prevention of Harassment, Sexual Harassment, Discrimination, and Abuse of Authority policy, which formed the basis of UN Women's management letter to the Executive Board. To further promote leadership that embraces accountability and co-creates a culture transformation that is free from SEA, SH, as well as other forms of discrimination, in April 2022, UN-Women kicked off its learning journey for senior managers, within its Leadership and Team Development Strategy 2022-2023, with a 360-feedback exercise in April 2022, which will be followed by executive one-on-one coaching.

7. To empower all personnel to contribute to the fight against the root causes of SEA and SH across all levels of the organization, UN-Women is developing an additional module on the intersectionality of the multiple forms of discrimination, shaped by power relations, that give rise to sexual misconduct into its scenario-based SEA and SH training workshops. In addition, UN-Women initiated the updating of its mandatory online training to prevent sexual harassment, using a highly participatory process involving key stakeholders from across the entity, involving inter-alia the inclusion of UN Women context-specific scenarios and the usage of engaging learning activities. Lastly, UN-Women hosted in May 2022 a dialogue event entitled "Ask Me Anything about our Diversity, Inclusion and Shared Leadership Work" as part of its ongoing efforts to strengthen the overall workplace culture.

II. Planned work for the remainder of 2022

8. Building on the progress made over the last years, UN-Women has planned a set of targeted actions to further strengthen the prevention of and response to SEA and SH within UN-Women and across the UN system, using a victim/survivor-centred approach, with a special focus on the promotion of a culture change to address their root causes. These planned initiatives include, inter-alia: the introduction of additional modules to the scenario-based SEA and SH training workshops, covering among others intersectionality, power relations, and positive masculinities, as well as new participatory learning activities; the facilitation of further training-of-trainers-style capacity building for UN Women's PSEA and SH focal point network, dedicated to the prevention of and response to SH; the undertaking of awareness raising efforts that illustrate the connection of SEA and SH with other forms of gender-based violence and the synergies that exist with the work on the elimination of violence against women; and the development and implementation of a continuous data collection and comparative analysis strategy for metrics to measure progress on tackling SEA and SH.

9. Furthermore, the Deputy Executive Director for Policy, Programme, Civil Society and Intergovernmental Support, in a spokesperson role on Addressing Sexual Harassment and Other Forms of Discrimination, as well as Senior Executive Leadership are continuing to place survivors' experiences at the heart of UN Women's work to address sexual harassment, including in the planning related to two upcoming global policy advocacy sessions in 2022 (1. Preventing and

Responding to Sexual Harassment: A Focus on Refugee and Internally Displaced Women and Girls and 2. Sexual Harassment and Reconfigured Educational Settings) that will include key messages from leadership alongside external experts and interagency partners.

10. Simultaneously, UN-Women continues to take the required actions to have in place the strongest possible PSEA and SH policy and governance framework, to steadily enhance its SEA and SH prevention mechanisms, to further advance the operationalization of all PSEA and SH structures across regional and country offices, to promote maximum coordination of its efforts, and to actively engage in UN system-wide improvement efforts through meaningful participation in the third phase of the CEB Taskforce on Addressing SH, as well as regular involvement with the SEA Working Group.