

BACKGROUND NOTE

UPDATES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF UNICEF'S WORK ON PROTECTION FROM SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE, SEXUAL HARASSMENT, AND OTHER FORMS OF WORKPLACE ABUSE

UNICEF Executive Board – Annual Session, 11-14 June 2019

1. In its *decision 2018/8, paragraph 3*, UNICEF's Executive Board requested UNICEF's management to provide updates on progress made on actions taken to strengthen protection (a) against sexual exploitation and abuse and (b) sexual harassment and to present at each annual session its annual certification to the Executive Board, as required under the Secretary-General's report on special measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse.
2. Furthermore, in its *decision 2019/5, paragraph 4*, UNICEF's Executive Board took note with appreciation of the independent panel review of the UNICEF response to protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, its findings, conclusions and recommendations and requested UNICEF's management to provide an update on the implementation of the recommendations set out in the report and agreed to in the related management response as part of the annual report on the evaluation function in UNICEF at the annual session of 2020 (*decision 2019/5, paragraph 6*).
3. This background note is provided for the 2019 Annual Session (11-14 June 2019) as an input to those requested updates. Whilst the focus is largely on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment, as some of the gravest manifestations of misconduct, reference is also made throughout the document to other forms of workplace abuse, including harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority, as these issues are all closely intertwined and at times rooted in gender and other power imbalances that still prevail in many organizations and in society at large.

I. Introduction

4. Sexual exploitation and abuse and workplace abuse are deep betrayals of UNICEF's core values and everything that the organization stands for. Preventing and responding to sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and other forms of workplace abuse (harassment, discrimination and abuse of authority) is thus a corporate priority of the highest order for the organization.

5. UNICEF's vision is to realize the right of individuals and communities that we serve to access the protection and assistance they are entitled to without the fear of sexual exploitation and abuse and the right of all UNICEF staff and associated personnel to work in an environment free from all forms of abuse, where the highest standards of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability are upheld and cherished by all those working with and for the organization. These core values are UNICEF's greatest assets in fulfilling our mission and mandate.
6. Fully recognizing the necessity to do more and better to uphold those values, UNICEF has significantly stepped up efforts, at all levels of the organization, to accelerate action to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and other forms of workplace abuse. **Firstly**, UNICEF has invested in a comprehensive process of self-reflection and assessment of its own internal processes, policies and systems with a view to identify systemic gaps and entry points for strengthening our response to these issues. **Secondly**, UNICEF has been leading inter-agency efforts to accelerate action at the country level around prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment by taking up, since September of last year, the championship of this agenda within the Interagency Standing Committee (IASC), the primary mechanism for inter-agency coordination of humanitarian assistance. **Thirdly**, UNICEF has been actively engaging in different workstreams led by the Office of the Special Coordinator on improving the United Nations response to sexual exploitation and abuse thus substantially contributing to an enhanced and more coherent UN-system wide approach through the development of aligned mechanisms and procedures, standardized protocols and tools. And lastly, we continue to work to ensure staff at all levels of the organization – particularly at country and regional level – are continuously updated about the actions taken and empowered to seize opportunities to contribute to this critical reform agenda.
7. Looking ahead, and acknowledging that eradicating sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment (and other forms of workplace abuse) from all our programmes and operations requires also changing mindsets and attitudes, in addition to systems and policies, UNICEF is also committing to invest in deeper culture change initiatives and management change processes. This is necessary to address the root causes of these issues and ultimately realize the vision of an organization free from all forms of exploitation and abuse, both towards the people we are meant to serve as well as our own fellow workers.

II. Our journey to ending sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and other forms of workplace abuse: key process milestones

8. During 2018-2019, UNICEF engaged in a number of critical workstreams and commissioned a series of external independent reviews to examine issues relating to Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (PSEA), sexual harassment (SH) and other forms of workplace abuse,

including gender discrimination, with a view to identify gaps and strengthen our response and systems. Those are detailed below.

9. **Independent Panel Review of the UNICEF Response to PSEA** – In late May 2018, UNICEF Executive Director requested the Evaluation Office to establish an Independent Panel of Experts to undertake a review of UNICEF’s approach to PSEA. At the core of the review was the need to assess what is already in place and what could be done to further strengthen our action. The report was finalized in September 2018. The review is structured across four pillars of **management and coordination, community engagement, prevention and response**, in line with the 2012 IASC Minimum Operating Standards for PSEA. It examines all five areas of UNICEF’s work on PSEA namely: i) reporting mechanisms; victim assistance; investigation and accountability and governance; iv) capacity strengthening and coordination; and v) prevention including safeguarding. The Panel agrees that UNICEF alone cannot ensure protection for SEA; it is a system wide responsibility. UNICEF has a unique role, though, to ensuring that system-wide PSEA policies, practices and processes are child-friendly and treat children as rights holders. The Panel sets out key findings under each of the four core chapters and provide 32 action points across the report responding to these. The core message of the Panel is that UNICEF needs a whole of organization strategy and action plan for PSEA, reflecting the **five necessary conditions required for UNICEF to improve fundamentally the prevention of SEA**, namely: **accountability, leadership, organizational culture, coherence** (within UNICEF and UN system wide) and **connected impact of these conditions on the ground**. The key findings and recommendations of the Panel, along with the UNICEF management response, were presented to UNICEF Executive Board in its first regular session in February 2019. There has been already steady progress on many of the recommendations included in the report and UNICEF’s management response to it. This is detailed in the updates to the management response presented along with this background note.

10. **Morgan Lewis review** - In 2018, UNICEF commissioned the law firm Morgan Lewis to undertake a **review of internal sexual harassment investigations that were conducted and concluded during the period 2013 – 2017**, with a view to strengthen internal investigation processes and systems and ensure they fully comply with best investigation practices. Morgan Lewis submitted its report to UNICEF in August 2018. One of their key overall observation was that more needs to be done to ensure that investigations serve also broader organizational and cultural goals, like fostering a safe culture where sexual harassment of any type is simply not tolerated. For example, how the investigation office responds to complainant allegations plays an important role in whether individuals feel safe to come forward. The report provides recommendations about changes to policies and processes that could help us ensure future investigations meet current best practice. While the review examined all relevant cases, the report does not provide specifics on cases. UNICEF accepted all its seven recommendations and is in the process of implementing them, as described further under section III. The findings and recommendations of the Morgan Lewis review are

subsumed in the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, as presented below, and will be discussed at the Executive Board informal briefing in August and at its second regular session in September of this year.

11. **The Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender-Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority (ITF)** – The ITF was established in August 2018 with the mandate to “assess patterns of workplace gender-related discrimination, harassment and abuse of authority in UNICEF, consider best practices from within the UN and other institutions in addressing similar issues; and provide actionable recommendations to UNICEF leadership”. In addition to the Co-Chairs, the ITF comprised eight voluntary members representing external leaders from public and private spheres, international development agencies, academia and the UN with a wealth and wide variety of experiences, including dealing with workplace issues of gender equality, discrimination, abuse of power and harassment. In addition to reviewing relevant UNICEF policies, reports and surveys, the ITF has been engaging with some 350 staff from HQ, Regional Offices and Country Offices via a confidential email address, by phone, through focus groups and one-on-one interviews. The ITF met with staff in nine country offices in various parts of the world making special efforts to hear directly from staff to understand the workplace challenges they encounter. Although the ITF fully supported the Executive Director’s goal to move forward swiftly in her aims, the members felt that it was critical to give adequate time to hear directly from staff, including those based in the field. Each ITF member offered to visit a UNICEF office close to their home-base or their travel routes at no cost to UNICEF to get a general sense of the workplace culture and to actively seek out engagement from staff. In addition to the large number of staff who came forward to discuss their specific cases or relevant experiences with the ITF or share them through a confidential email address. In order to complete these visits, a three-month extension of the original timeframe was agreed upon to allow for deeper staff engagement with the ITF. The ITF took an iterative approach during its tenure thus enabling UNICEF to take early action on specific identified issues rather than wait for the final report. In particular **a set of preliminary recommendations were shared with the Executive Director in September 2018 and were made available to all staff.** In December 2018, the ITF recommended that UNICEF brings on board an external consulting firm to overlap with the ITF and serve as a Change Management Team to assist UNICEF in planning and implementing the culture and management changes recommended by the ITF and in other relevant reviews. The selection is ongoing, and the firm is expected to start in early June. **Some of the actions taken by UNICEF in follow-up to those early recommendations are described under section III.** The ITF co-chairs regularly consulted with the Executive Director and Deputy Executive Director-Management on the implementation of those recommendations, throughout the ITF timeframe. **A draft report was delivered to UNICEF in April and UNICEF is already working on its preliminary management response. The final report is expected before the end of June.** A dedicated discussion on the ITF report and UNICEF’s preliminary response, in the presence of the ITF co-chairs, is scheduled for the Executive Board second regular session

in September this year. Since UNICEF has now received the draft ITF report, an initial update on the overall findings, recommendations and UNICEF's response will be provided also during the May informal session ahead of the annual session in June.

12. **Gender Equality Certification Review** – In 2018, UNICEF pursued an examination of its gender equality policies and practices through the **World Economic Forum's Economic Dividends for Gender Equality certification**, known as "**EDGE**", which provides the leading global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender equality. EDGE assesses policies, practices and numbers across several different areas of analysis: recruitment and promotion, leadership development training and mentoring, flexible working arrangements and organizational culture. The objective of EDGE is to capture where the most important opportunities are for an organization to attract, develop, motivate and retain a gender-balanced pool of talents. EDGE looked at UNICEF data, policies and practices during Q1 and Q2 in 2018. UNICEF has been benchmarked against peer organizations and against the EDGE global standards. **In June 2018, UNICEF received EDGE Certification, becoming the first United Nations agency to earn the leading global assessment methodology and business certification standard for gender equality** for its implementation of a framework for change and achievement of significant milestones toward building an inclusive culture of workplace gender equality. **This ranking puts UNICEF at the top 11 per cent of all EDGE certified organizations.** The action plan UNICEF has developed, together with EDGE, includes providing more flexible working arrangements, conducting yearly gender pay-gap assessments, and improving communication around the recruitment and promotion process. Successful implementation of actions will be part of the EDGE process to get re-certified. UNICEF plans to increase the use of flexible working arrangements over the next two years as part of the global campaign launched under the umbrella of the EDGE certification. Once the initial certification expires after two years, UNICEF aims to move up to the next EDGE Certification level.

III. The progress we have made throughout the journey

13. A lot has been achieved since last year, both within UNICEF and at the inter-agency level, to strengthen prevention and response to sexual misconduct, including sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment through important changes in systems, policies and practices. Moreover, UNICEF took several actions to improve its own internal processes and systems to address other forms of workplace abuse, namely harassment, gender and other forms of discrimination and abuse of authority. This section provides a summary of the tangible progress made, including against the recommendations of the various reviews mentioned above. For clarity of presentation, UNICEF internal actions and inter-agency actions are presented under two different headings, though they are naturally linked and mutually reinforcing.

[UNICEF internal work on protection from sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment and other forms of workplace abuse](#)

14. An **internal whole-of-organization strategy on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment** was developed early in the year, as recommended by the Independent Panel Review of UNICEF response to SEA and is being rolled-out across the organization to guide prevention and response action at the country level. A communication strategy is being developed to support the uptake of the strategy, internally and externally.
15. For the last 18 months, UNICEF Executive Director has prioritized direct support to country and regional offices to accelerate PSEA operational actions through the allocation of substantial human and financial resources. **For 2018-2019, UNICEF's Executive Director committed US\$11 million of its core resources as catalytic funds to strengthen and accelerate PSEA work in 17 "high risk" humanitarian operations in three different regions** (up from US\$ 2.2. million allocated in 2016-2017 to headquarters, two regional offices and eight country offices). ("High risk" refers to the risk of SEA due to humanitarian need where the dependence of crisis-affected populations on humanitarian assistance renders them more vulnerable to SEA.) These funds are being used to strengthen work around three key priority areas in line with UNICEF's strategy, namely i) safe and accessible reporting, ii) quality and accessible survivors' assistance, and iii) accountability and investigations. In some countries these funds have been used also to step a system-wide response through, for instance, the appointment of a senior PSEA coordinator under the Humanitarian Coordinator's office, in line with the IASC PSEA Acceleration Plan.
16. A **senior coordinator on PSEA and workplace abuse has been appointed in the Office of the Executive Director** to support various parts of the organization with an enhanced and accelerated response, including direct support to country offices and regional offices and direct support to staff.
17. A **senior culture change advisor in the Office of the Executive Director has been recruited and will join in mid-June**. Building on the assessments conducted by the various reviews and supported by an external change management consultancy firm, the Principal advisor will lead the process for the development and implementation of a strategy for sustainable culture change based on UNICEF's five core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability, supported by an implementation plan.
18. **UNICEF has amended the General Terms and Conditions (GTC) in Programme Co-operation Agreements with implementing partners and contractual/tender provisions with vendors to ensure compliance with our PSEA policy**. Relevant policies and standards for contracts are available on the UNICEF public website to increase the transparency and knowledge for existing and new suppliers of our requirements. A **PSEA toolkit for staff and partners** is being developed and will be ready for roll out in the second half of the year (second draft underway)

and field tested in one country). The tool kit includes comprehensive guidance and operational resources and tools to strengthen PSEA work at country level with implementing partners. A PSEA Assessment tool is also under development, with rollout envisaged in June 2019. The tool can be used either as a self-assessment by partners, or by UNICEF as a risk assessment instrument, to highlight the relative strengths and/or areas for improvement in PSEA systems and procedures of the partner. The PSEA Assessment tool is expected to inform the development of an Action Plan for the partner to improve their PSEA systems and procedures; and is also envisaged to inform risk mitigation measures - such as safe programming and programme monitoring - by UNICEF in working with the partner.

19. **UNICEF’s mandatory annual PSEA online training course completion rates by staff is at present above 95 percent globally.** UNICEF is aiming for 100 per cent completion. The PSEA course is publicly available online (in English, French, Spanish and Arabic) in Agora, a free portal offering tailored learning solutions to UNICEF's staff, partners and supporters. To date, the course has been undertaken by almost 9,000 non-UNICEF individuals, many of whom are staff of UNICEF Implementing Partners. The course is currently being upgraded and will be made available also in additional languages (Russian and Portuguese).
20. **UNICEF amended its Policy on “Prohibition of Discrimination, Harassment, Sexual Harassment and Abuse of authority”** to allow for anonymous reporting of workplace misconduct and to remove the 6-month deadline for reporting and the non-staff personnel restrictions on reporting. Moreover, UNICEF is currently further reviewing its Policy in light of the Chief Executive Board (CEB) Model policy on sexual harassment, thus adopting new improved and up-to date standards and processes.
21. **UNICEF issued its amended Policy on the disciplinary Process and measures for misconduct in January 2019.** All staff members are now obliged to report any allegations of misconduct about which they are informed. The new policy also requires the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) to ensure the identity of the person submitting a complaint is not disclosed, except when such disclosure is necessary for the conduct of proceedings and only with the consent of those who reported the case. **In the period 1 January – 31 December 2018, the Deputy Executive Director, Management, after the completion of the disciplinary process, issued 13 disciplinary sanctions for staff misconduct including dismissal/separation from service (6), demotion (2), loss of steps (3) and written censure (2).** The UNICEF 2018 Office of Internal Audit and Investigations Annual Report to the Executive Board includes details on investigations and disciplinary sanctions issued in 2018, as well as results of internal audits issued in 2018 and implementation rates of previously issued internal audit action areas. This report will be presented to the Executive Board at the June annual session.
22. As a follow-up to the Morgan Lewis review, **UNICEF is investing in strengthening its internal investigative function**, including through the **introduction of credibility assessments within**

current investigative frameworks, in compliance with the legal parameters set by the United Nations Administration of Justice ; the **creation of ten new positions** to strengthen our investigative capacity, bringing the investigations section staffing to 17 staff members including the chief investigator; the **provision of specialized training for our investigators** on issues such as forensic interviewing of children, investigations of sexual and gender based violence and sexual misconduct, with a dedicated training budget ; the **introduction of a 90 days target for completion of all sexual misconduct related investigations**, and the **appointment of a case coordinator** for all allegations involving sexual harassment, harassment and abuse of authority. The case coordinator will provide regular status updates to affected parties and will be the first point of contact for victims-based complaints and to advise staff who wish to have confidential discussions about available options for reporting and addressing workplace abuse. Once they have all the information, staff can decide if they want a formal or informal process. If they want a formal process, OIAI records their consent and initiates an investigation if there is sufficient information. **An updated investigations case management system is being implemented that fortifies record keeping. Work is also underway to update the investigations manual.** UNICEF has increased the frequency with which it reports to staff on investigations and disciplinary measures as a confidence measures, without compromising the confidentiality and integrity of the processes.

23. Under the **revised UNICEF policy on whistle-blower protection against retaliation**, the possibility for the Ethics Office to recommend protection against retaliation was extended beyond UNICEF staff members to also cover other UNICEF Personnel, in particular consultants. **The revised UNICEF policy on whistle-blower protection against retaliation provides for the first time the possibility to obtain, under certain conditions, preventive measures against retaliation.** In addition, the changes in the UNICEF policy on whistle-blower protection against retaliation also included the abolishment of the previous statutory limitation, which means that **there is no longer a time limit for requesting protection against retaliation.** The UNICEF Ethics Office is actively promoting the policy through customized training sessions, both face to face and remotely, as well as webinars and the development of related information products (e.g. Pocket Guide on Whistleblower policy, FAQs on whistleblower protection, Roadmap on Where to go when – Addressing workplace issues in UNICEF).
24. **Vetting procedures have been strengthened throughout UNICEF internal recruitment processes**, including through multiple internal and external reference checks. This also includes the implementation of a system wide, confidential screening database (Clear Check) which prevents the hiring and re-hiring of individuals whose working relationship with an organization within the UN system ended because of a determination that they perpetrated sexual misconduct or separated while under an investigation (see point 31).
25. **UNICEF has achieved full gender parity for the group of UNICEF’s senior leaders**, with 109 women and 108 men in the new Senior Staff Rotation group. At the same time, **UNICEF has**

improved geographic diversity to 40 percent program country nationals and will continue striving for full geographic parity. UNICEF was commended as high performer in the Global Health 50/50 report 2019, which focused this year on policies for preventing sexual harassment, supporting parental leave and flexible working and undertaking gender pay gaps. Moreover, UNICEF launched the “**Gender Push Initiative**”, an informal group of staff bringing together people who are passionate about gender issues from different parts of the organization. The group directly supports the work of the Gender and Global Staff Survey Working Group which aims to contribute to Staff Empowerment initiatives, “enabling a UNICEF fit -for-purpose to promote and uphold the principles of gender equality and women’s empowerment and to ensure that UNICEF organizational work culture upholds gender equality in policy and practice, as perceived by both female and male staff.”

26. Several actions have also been taken to strengthen internal communication on this agenda. This includes regular updates to all staff on UNICEF action to address SEA/SH and workplace issues and Townhall meetings; the setting up of dedicated webpages on intranet with technical resources and tools, including the hub “**Culture Change: Living Our Values**” for information about the sustained effort to improve workplace culture across UNICEF; online platforms to promote a speak up culture and conversations around how to create an inclusive and safe workplace for everyone who works at UNICEF. “Speaking up” is one of the five corporate priorities, based on findings from the 2017 Global Staff Survey. Led by the Global Staff Association, the “**VOICE Initiative**” was launched in July 2018, as an organization-wide initiative to enhance the 'speak up' culture at UNICEF. The VOICE initiative seeks to support offices in building a safe workplace and recommends a range of activities and resources that they may capitalize on.

[UNICEF’s contribution to inter-agency work on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment](#)

27. In line with the PSEA Panel Review’s recommendations, UNICEF is using the chairpersonship of IASC SEA/SH to promote inter-agency accountability, ensure coherent and sustainable PSEA systems at country level under the SRSG/RC/HC, and pooling of resources to maximize country impact. Under the leadership of the UNICEF Executive Director, a **IASC Championship Strategy on PSEA and Sexual Harassment was launched in November 2018**, centred around strengthening reporting at the community level and promoting a “speak-up” culture among all IASC agencies, improving support and protection for survivors, and strengthening vetting, reference-checking, investigation processes and disciplinary measures.
28. Under the SEA/SH championship agenda, **UNICEF’s Executive Director launched a proposal to accelerate PSEA action and investment at the country level, across all humanitarian and refugee contexts, which was endorsed by all IASC Principals in December of 2018**. SEA is a system wide concern requiring a system-wide response. UNICEF championship of the SEA/SH agenda has led to an acceleration of country level work and greater coherence within the

humanitarian system around a set of **three survivor-centered outcomes** and common strategic priorities, namely i) **access to safe and trusted reporting channels**; ii) **access to quality response services**; and iii) **access to prompt and respectful investigations**. The plan also includes an accountable structure under HC leadership to coordinate and deliver on these outcomes. During Q1 of 2019, **UNICEF and OCHA surveyed Humanitarian Country Teams (HCT) to establish a baseline in 34 countries with humanitarian response plans and refuge response plans, which will benchmark progress on the implementation of the PSEA agenda and prioritize action going forward**. The gaps identified by HCTs were discussed at the annual Humanitarian Coordinators retreat (May 2019). Generating the resources needed to scale up and sustain SEA work at country level, including to address gender-based violence in emergency programmes, which is also critical for SEA survivors' assistance, remains a priority. As IASC champion, UNICEF Executive Director and the Emergency Relief Coordinator are advocating for the inclusion of PSEA in the humanitarian planning cycle. The humanitarian response plan and other response plans provide an important funding mechanism to scale up SEA prevention and response efforts in all humanitarian operations.

29. As new co-chairs of the **IASC results group 2 on Accountability and Inclusion**, which includes PSEA, UNICEF will continue to support the implementation of a system wide PSEA enhanced coordination structure under the overall leadership of Humanitarian Coordinators focusing on accelerated action at the country level, including through the roll out of the IASC PSEA Acceleration Plan.
30. **UNICEF works closely with the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate** and is an active member of the Trust Fund in support of victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. With a view to strengthen accountability and survivors' access to justice, UNICEF is proposing to hold a consultation with key actors involved in legal aid and redress for victims of human rights abuses, with a view to identify practical ways of improving access to legal aid and effective remedy for victims of sexual exploitation and abuse by UN/related personnel. UNICEF is working with the Office of the Victims' Rights Advocate on the finalization of the UN Victims Assistance Protocol.
31. **UNICEF is co-chairing with WFP the sub-Group on Improved Reporting Management of the United Nations System Chief Executive Board for Coordination (CEB), Task Force on Sexual Harassment**. This work aims to ensure that uniform data on sexual misconduct allegations is collected and shared among 31 UN intergovernmental bodies, to inform policies and procedures, while contributing to a **system-wide screening database ("Clear Check")** to be used during recruitment processes. **Clear Check, is a common confidential database which provides a critical system-wide tool to avoid the hiring and re-hiring of individuals whose working relationship with an organization within the UN system ended because of a determination that they perpetrated sexual misconduct or separated while under an investigation with which they did not cooperate**. Under this workstream, UNICEF also

contributed to the development of the SH Model Policy, which will provide the basis for a new internal policy on misconduct (currently being finalized).

32. **UNICEF is also a member of the CEB Task Force Sub-Group on Strengthening Investigatory Capacity and Improving Investigations of Sexual Harassment within the Organizations of the UN System.** This work aims firstly, to develop a model of best standards and practice for the investigation of sexual harassment; secondly, to improve the resourcing of sexual harassment investigations; and thirdly, to improve accountability.

33. **UNICEF co-chaired a task force to develop the UN Protocol on Sexual Exploitation and Abuse involving Implementing Partners, which was endorsed by the UN High Level Steering Group on SEA in March 2018.** The Protocol outlines the requirements of the United Nations, including its funds and programmes when working with implementing partners, to ensure adequate safeguards and appropriate action for prevention and response to sexual exploitation and abuse. UNICEF has operationalised the UN Protocol globally through actions implemented by UNICEF country offices, including those mentioned in paragraph 17 above. Other activities have included written notice given to all government and Civil Society Organizations (CSO) partners of the SEA zero tolerance policy; signature of the revised legal agreements (refer paragraph 17 above); training activities; and updated due diligence requirements for CSO partners. **UNICEF is also leading the development of a UN system wide Victim Assistance Protocol, which is expected to be endorsed in June by the UN High Level Steering Group on SEA.**

34. **UNICEF is systematically reporting all SEA allegations involving its staff/personnel or contractors to the Office of the Special Coordinator for SEA** for inclusion in the quarterly reports to the Secretary General (the report is public) through a new online secured reporting system (**iReport SEA Tracker**). UNICEF has also an internal reporting system where the **Executive Director is notified within 24 hours of any SEA allegations reported from country offices for immediate follow-up action**, always prioritizing survivors' assistance. In 2018, UNICEF reported eight allegations of SEA (by number of victims) involving UNICEF staff and related personnel, of which two involved minors and an additional 12 allegations of SEA (by number of victims) involving implementing partners personnel. All SEA allegations related to UNICEF staff and personnel were promptly investigated, three were closed during 2018 with the following resolution: 1 substantiated, 1 member of personnel left while under investigation and 1 investigation is still ongoing (as of April). In the first quarter of 2019, UNICEF reported a total of seven SEA allegations, with five cases involving personnel of implementing partners and two cases where the alleged perpetrators are UNICEF personnel. Investigations are ongoing.

IV. Organizational priorities going forward

35. Over the coming months, UNICEF will prioritize the following areas of work, in relation with the SEA/SH agenda:

- ✓ Acceleration of PSEA work at the country level to fully realize the commitments laid down in the IASC PSEA Plan and fill the gaps identified in the baseline mapping. Sustained investment is urgently needed to ensure all humanitarian operations have dedicated PSEA coordinators on board and that survivors' rights are at the centre of the PSEA response, in terms of safe access to complaint mechanisms, services and accountability.
- ✓ Reinforce engagement with our partners, including through the roll-out of the new PSEA tool kit for Implementing Partners, and PSEA Assessment, to meet ongoing commitments laid out in the UN Implementing Partners Protocol.
- ✓ Lead a series of SEA/SH inter-agency learning events with the objective of fostering cross-fertilization among agencies, including around broader organization culture change initiatives.
- ✓ Galvanize commitment by all agencies to commit resources to fill the gaps in SEA systems and services identified at the country level to support the three outcomes laid down in the IASC proposal for SEA acceleration in the field, namely reporting; survivors' assistance and accountability. Engage with donors to ensure SEA work is properly resourced and sustained over the longer term, including through existing humanitarian funding streams (e.g. Humanitarian Response Plans, Refugee Response Plans)

36. With regard to internal work to address workplace abuse issues, UNICEF will:

- ✓ Further invest in strengthening internal complaints mechanisms and accountability, including a 24/7 phone hotline to receive complaints and identify sources for support, and a new Protocol to ensure a more integrated and efficient response to alleged workplace misconduct and better support to all concerned parties, the complainant, the alleged offender and other concerned staff members.
- ✓ Enhance internal and external communication through a broad communications strategy.
- ✓ Implement the recommendations of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority, with a focus on i) change management culture, ii) strengthening the Human Resources and Investigative functions, including the internal complaint systems and iii) further invest in effective internal communication with all staff on workplace issues.
- ✓ Increase the use of flexible working arrangements over the next two years as part of the global campaign launched under the umbrella of the EDGE certification.

VI. Conclusions

37. **This work is not time-bound.** It requires continuous commitment at all levels, strong partnerships and sustained financial resources, particularly towards strengthening survivors' assistance. **Preventing sexual misconduct (and more broadly workplace abuse) requires also long-term investment in culture changes processes** within our own organization as well as within the communities we serve and society at large to address deeply rooted gender and power inequalities and those harmful social norms, values and beliefs that normalize sexual harassment and that are also the breeding ground for sexual misconduct.
38. The sense of urgency that public attention to reports of sexual misconduct in the aid sector has brought to the fore in recent times has created an **important historical opportunity to accelerate change**, one that we cannot miss. Sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment are simply incompatible with our values and everything we stand for, our belief in fundamental rights, in the equality of men and women, boys and girls, our core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability. It is a watershed moment for UNICEF, and the aid community at large, to reaffirm the centrality of those values and ensure all our programmes and operations are free from this scourge.
39. UNICEF looks forward to continuing its close engagement with the Executive Board on all aspects of the implementation of this agenda.