End-of-Year Management Letter on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA) and Reporting of SEA Allegations

In accordance with Section 4.6 of the Secretary-General’s Bulletin on “Special measures for protection against sexual exploitation and sexual abuse” (ST/SGB/2003/13) and in accordance with CF/EXD//2004-002, I, Henrietta H. Fore, hereby certify that UNICEF has reported to the Secretary-General all allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA) that have been brought to its attention in 2019 and that meet the reporting criteria/thresholds set by the Office of the Special Coordinator, that is all credible allegations where there is sufficient information to identify an act of sexual exploitation and abuse against an identifiable perpetrator or identifiable victim.

UNICEF has taken all appropriate measures to address such allegations, in accordance with established rules and procedures for dealing with cases of staff misconduct and rules and procedures for dealing with allegations perpetrated by Implementing Partners’ personnel.

During my tenure as the Inter-agency Standing Committee Champion on sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, in 2018-2019, I focused on accelerating collective action in countries facing humanitarian crisis around the three priority areas endorsed by the IASC Principals, namely safe and accessible reporting mechanisms, quality assistance for survivors of SEA, and the ability to offer survivors prompt, confidential and respectful investigations. This emphasis on country-level implementation of the PSEA agenda has led to greater inter-agency cooperation and coherence, which is essential for a stronger and more sustainable system wide response to allegations of SEA.

Active engagement from the UN Victim’s Rights Advocate and the UN Office of the Special Coordinator was vital and brought the experience of the UN system-wide approach together with the work of the IASC, promoting a coherent approach to country-level coordination. A detailed account of the UNICEF Championship work is attached to this letter for your further reference.

In addition, UNICEF has taken the following steps to strengthen effective prevention and response to SEA in 2019:

- UNICEF developed a whole-of-organization Strategy to Prevent and Respond to SEA and SH. Moreover, UNICEF developed its annual PSEA Management Action Plan as required by the UNSG’s annual SEA Special Measures Report. An internal cross-divisional taskforce monitors the implementation of the Strategy and the Management Action Plan.
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- Following the recommendation of the 2018 Independent Panel Review of the UNICEF Response to PSEA, UNICEF appointed a Senior Coordinator on PSEA and Workplace Abuse. The position is placed within my office for the current time period to ensure organization-wide implementation of the above-mentioned

- Strategy and Management Action Plan across different divisions, including follow-up on the recommendations of the Independent Panel Review. The functions will then be streamlined into the relevant divisions for long term sustainability.

- To prevent UNICEF from hiring former United Nations staff having committed SEA in the past or having left the United Nations while being subject of a SEA investigation, UNICEF actively uses the ClearCheck database. Data of former UNICEF staff who committed SEA or who left UNICEF while being subject of a SEA investigation are regularly entered in the database. Two entries for SEA were made in 2019. UNICEF strengthened its vetting procedures also by introducing mandatory reference checks on SEA and child safeguarding, especially for elevated risk roles.

- To expand awareness of SEA inside the organization, UNICEF requests all personnel to complete the mandatory online PSEA training. As of 31 December 2019, 95% of UNICEF personnel had finished the course. An additional 9500 external learners completed the course in 2019. The training is currently under revision to include the prohibition of sexual relationships between aid workers and beneficiaries following the changes to IASC SEA Principle 4 agreed upon in 2019.

- UNICEF has designated SEA and Child Safeguarding as two distinct Enterprise Risks. As of 2020, all offices will be required to systematically assess, manage and report to senior management on those risks flowing from their work and on the measures taken to mitigate them using the UNICEF's enterprise Governance, Risk and Compliance system. This information will enable management to take informed decisions on how to further strengthen safeguarding practices across all our programmes and operations.

- UNICEF finalized in 2019 the Procedure for Managing Risks of SEA Involving Implementing Partners to further operationalize the commitments laid down in the UN Protocol on Allegations of SEA involving Implementing Partners. The Procedure contains an assessment tool and a practical toolkit for partners and will be rolled out from February 2020 onwards, starting with priority countries.
OFFICE OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

- To improve inter-agency coherence in assistance to victims of SEA, UNICEF, together with the Conduct and Discipline Service and the Office of the Victims’ Rights Advocate, led the development of a United Nations Victim Assistance Protocol, which was endorsed by the United Nations High-Level Steering Committee in December 2019. The Uniform Protocol on the Provision of Assistance to Victims of SEA will be rolled-out in 2020.

- To support regional and country-level implementation, UNICEF invested $10 million of its core resources in 2019 as catalytic funds to accelerate PSEA work in 15 priority countries, adding to the $11 million invested in 17 countries prioritized in 2018. To better monitor our progress, UNICEF developed a PSEA Results Monitoring Framework with measurable targets and indicators, which is now being rolled out in all 32 priority countries.

- UNICEF continued to invest in strengthening its investigation capacity for SEA. In 2019, in partnership with the National Children’s Advocacy Center, UNICEF trained investigators on child-friendly investigations. The partnership is ongoing. Sexual misconduct investigations average now 99 days.

- Following the release of the report of the Independent Task Force on Workplace Gender Discrimination, Sexual Harassment, Harassment and Abuse of Authority in June 2019, UNICEF has significantly stepped up its work on organizational culture change focusing on reaffirming the centrality of our core values of care, respect, integrity, trust and accountability in everything that we do; redefining people management’s skills to be more human-centric; and strengthening our accountability systems. This work is critical for the PSEA agenda too.

Recognizing the importance of transparency and accountability in the United Nations system with respect to fighting sexual exploitation and abuse, this has been done in good faith.

Henrietta H. Fore
Executive Director
29 January 2020