

U.S. Remarks at UNICEF First Regular Session 2023

Agenda Item 7: Metrics and Indicators to Measure Progress on Tackling SEAH

Thank you, Mr. President. The U.S. aligns itself with the joint statement delivered by the Kingdom of the Netherlands and offers these comments in its national capacity.

The United States welcomes the update from UNICEF on its work to address sexual exploitation and abuse, and sexual harassment (SEAH). In October 2022, the U.S. released principles that guide our government's engagement with the UN and other International Organizations on this important issue. These principles introduce a consistent and survivor-centered approach to protection from sexual misconduct.

Accountability is core to these principles. Going forward, it will be essential to use the identified metrics to measure and track successful policy implementation. We would welcome the inclusion of metrics that track programmatic efforts towards protection against SEAH and updates from both the Office of Internal Audit and Investigations (OIAI) and Management.

We commend UNICEF for striving for an organizational culture of zero tolerance for SEAH, and for recognizing the centrality of protection, accountability, and gender equality in its strategies, policies, and procedures. We encourage UNICEF to extend its culture of zero tolerance to include not just the acts themselves but also "zero tolerance" for inaction in dealing with SEA and sexual harassment.

We believe UNICEF can expand its current efforts to ensure a safe enabling environment for survivor-centered support, particularly during the investigative process. Consistent with ongoing performance measurement efforts, we encourage UNICEF to measure and report on the percentage of survivors who request or are able to safely access support after the incident is reported. We also would appreciate UNICEF sharing how it is enhancing its approach to survivor support based on learning or good practice from other incident response efforts.

Finally, with regard to UNICEF's October 2022 statement on the Elkorany case, the U.S. has called for the UN to undertake a review that includes a comprehensive examination of the handling of any sexual exploitation, abuse or harassment allegations against Mr. Elkorany during his employment with the UN. We requested that the investigation should examine whether officials were aware of Mr. Elkorany's misconduct and failed to take appropriate actions. We would appreciate an update on the status and findings of this review.

In closing, we look forward to the update at the 2023 Annual Session on UNICEF's action plan, progress, and targets. Thank you.