



**STATEMENT ON BEHALF OF THE GROUP OF 77 AND CHINA BY MS. SIRITHON WAIRATPANIJ, COUNSELLOR, PERMANENT MISSION OF THE KINGDOM OF THAILAND TO THE UNITED NATIONS, ON AGENDA ITEM 149: ADMINISTRATIVE AND BUDGETARY ASPECTS OF THE FINANCING OF THE UNITED NATIONS PEACEKEEPING OPERATIONS: COMBATING SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE, AT THE MAIN PART OF THE SEVENTY-FIRST SESSION OF THE FIFTH COMMITTEE OF THE UNITED NATIONS GENERAL ASSEMBLY (New York, 9 December 2016)**

Madam Chair,

1. I have the honor to speak on behalf of the Group of 77 and China on agenda item 149: Administrative and budgetary aspects of the financing of the United Nations peacekeeping operations, Combating sexual exploitation and abuse, or SEA.

2. At the outset, the Group once again pays special tribute to the uniformed and civilian men and women who serve in United Nations peacekeeping missions, often under adverse circumstances, and with courage, commitment, and professionalism. We remember especially those who lost their lives in service to their fellow man and the cause of peace.

3. The Group thanks Mr. Victor Kisob, Officer-in-Charge, Office of Human Resources Management, for introducing the report of the Secretary-General as contained in document A/71/97, and Mr. Carlos Ruiz-Massieu, Chair of the Advisory Committee on Budgetary and Administrative Questions, for introducing the related report as contained in document A/71/643. The Group is pleased that the "Independent review on sexual exploitation and abuse by international peacekeeping forces in the Central African Republic", dated 17 December 2015, has finally been published as a UN document as contained in A/71/99.

Madam Chair,

4. The Group takes this opportunity to reaffirm its strong commitment to the United Nations' zero-tolerance policy towards sexual exploitation and abuse. Zero-tolerance must apply equally to all, whether they are uniformed personnel or civilians, and regardless of the colour of their helmet.

5. In this regard, the Group welcomes the expressed commitment of the Secretary-General towards ensuring that the Organisation will not remain silent or passive in the face of reported incidents, as well as towards protecting and supporting victims of SEA. The Group also stresses, in light of the findings of the independent review, that accountability must apply at all levels of the Organisation. The Group believes that progress can only be achieved with strong, sustained leadership on this matter at the highest levels of the Organisation, and across all United Nations system entities.

6. The Group also takes this opportunity to thank and acknowledge the central role of Ms. Jane Holl Lute as Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations' Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse, and her contributions towards a more unified, system-wide approach to SEA. The Group notes her efforts to address the issue of system-wide coherence, and the work that has been done to increase engagement with Member States, identify root causes and risk factors, analyse gaps and weaknesses in current structures, and share best practices.

7. The Group also commends the contribution of the Office of Internal Oversight Services led by Ms Heidi Mendoza, Under Secretary-General for Internal Oversight Services.

Madam Chair,

8. Going forward, the Group would like to make three points on areas of concern.

9. First, the Group notes that despite the commitment of this Assembly to combatting SEA, the Organisation still lacks a comprehensive framework to respond to the serious problem of SEA. The response of various United Nations entities to SEA continues to be fragmented. The Group stresses the need for a clearer and more coherent framework for preventive and responsive actions. More must be done to improve pre-deployment training and address the root causes and risk factors contributing to SEA, respond swiftly to allegations, provide support and protection for victims, and ensure that the United Nations pursues justice from start to finish. The Group stresses once again that the Organisation must lead by example and hold all accountable, whether they are uniformed or UN personnel, however senior or junior they may be, and whatever the colour of their helmet.

10. Second, in the matter of reporting, the Group recalls that the General Assembly took a historical step forward during the second resumed session of its seventieth session earlier this year to adopt new measures in the reporting of allegations of SEA. With these new measures, Member States demonstrated their resolve to ensuring full transparency in reporting cases of SEA, with no distinction between UN and non-UN troops. However, the Group notes that reporting on SEA regarding preventive, enforcement, and remedial actions necessary to address and prevent incidents of SEA still lacks coordination. The Group notes that clear information on the overall scope of and linkages between different reports and databases on SEA is not available. The Group therefore emphasizes the need for improved collaboration across the system, in order to provide all stakeholders with comprehensive information that can contribute to better coordination in the Organisation's response.

11. Third, the Group stresses again that a comprehensive response to SEA requires strong leadership, and must also be a sustained effort by all stakeholders. The Group welcomes the outreach efforts by the Secretary-General, as well as the work of the high level steering group and looks forward to the continued and intensified engagement by the incoming Secretary-General. The Group also encourages the Secretariat to continue its active engagement with Member States. In this regard, the Group commends the efforts of many troop and police contributing countries, who have stepped up their coordination with the UN and taken steps to combat SEA in peacekeeping missions.

Madame Chair,

12. The Group of 77 and China stand ready to work constructively with all parties to ensure that we make a difference to the most vulnerable, and continue to uphold the name, reputation, credibility, and integrity of the United Nations.

I thank you, Madam Chair.