

Statement by H.E. Sir Emyr Jones Parry Permanent Representative United Kingdom
Mission to the United Nations on
Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in UN Peacekeeping Operations
Security Council Public Meeting - 23 February 2006

Mr President,

1. I would like to join others in underlining the importance of the issue that we are discussing today. We take allegations of sexual exploitation and abuse extremely seriously. They are directly relevant to the conduct of operations authorised by this Council. They also affect the wider image and credibility of the United Nations. This is why we must pursue such issues vigorously in all relevant organs of the UN system. The UK fully supports the statement to be made later this morning by Austria on behalf of the European Union.

Opening Remarks

2. I would like to begin by recognising the vital role that United Nations peacekeeping operations have played for decades in bringing peace and stability to countries emerging from war. The UK further recognises that, with a few exceptions, the women and men who serve in the UN peacekeeping operations do so with the utmost professionalism, dedication and, in some cases, make the ultimate sacrifice.
3. The UK was therefore deeply concerned with the allegations of sexual misconduct by United Nations peacekeeping personnel in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2004 and 2005. We condemn, in the strongest terms, all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse by whomever they are committed. We must emphasise once again that misconduct by UN peacekeeping personnel is as unacceptable as any other instance and must not be tolerated by the UN or member states. We strongly support the actions of the Secretary-General to implement his 'zero-tolerance' approach in all United Nation Missions.
4. We welcomed the comprehensive report on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel (A/59/710), prepared by the Secretary-General's Adviser on this issue, H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Husseini, Permanent Representative of the Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan, which contained detailed recommendations on tackling this issue and reiterated the importance of urgent action on sexual exploitation and abuse.
5. The UK recalls the overwhelming consensus that was reached by member states at the last Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations (C-34), to commit to implementing fundamental, systematic changes as a matter of urgency, drawing on the recommendations in the comprehensive report. We hope that we will all

work together to see that these recommendations are fully and properly implemented. We stress the importance of demonstrating that the UN is making real progress on the ground as well as in Committee. We also urge all members to maintain this consensus in the delivery of specific improvements within their respective states.

DPKO Action

6. In this regard we welcome the fact that uniform standards have now been implemented for all civilian and uniformed personnel contracted by the United Nations. We also welcome DPKO's efforts to finalise the draft model memorandum of understanding, taking into account the recommendations made in the comprehensive report and we hope the General Assembly can adopt this before the end of its 60th session. We would like to take this opportunity to highlight to member states that this is just a model, which can be adapted for each TCC.
7. Furthermore, we welcome the progress that has been made in the area of training, and in particular the mandatory SEA module now introduced, as well as progress on welfare and recreation. The UK commends the efforts of the UN personnel who continue to work hard to put in place the changes required both in the short and longer term, and in particular the commitment of the Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, Jean-Marie Guehenno to implement those recommendations that are within the purview of his department.
8. However, while there has been some progress in tackling this difficult and sensitive issue, sexual exploitation and abuse remains a significant problem in many missions. Both DPKO and Troop Contributing Countries need to do much more to implement the decisions taken at the C-34 in 2005 to enforce the Secretary General's zero tolerance policy with particular emphasis on effective prevention. Together we must do our utmost to solve this problem and be much more transparent in the way we handle it. If we fail to do so, we do nothing less than risk the success of the missions and put the future of UN peacekeeping in jeopardy.

Gender Mainstreaming

9. A crucial factor in preventing misconduct is capacity building in the area of human rights and the widespread mainstreaming of gender awareness across peacekeeping missions. Systematic change is needed so that gender issues are included in pre-mission planning and mission implementation, as well as crucially continuing into the post-mission phase. The UK urges DPKO to work with the UN Country Teams to ensure that sufficient human rights and gender expertise remains in countries to assist the national government when a peacekeeping mission withdraws.
10. The widespread mainstreaming of gender into all policies and programmes at the international and national level is also a crucial factor in the prevention of sexual exploitation and abuse. We must therefore do justice to SCR 1325, ensuring that

women are full and equal participants in peace processes, and through that create sustainable peace

UK Action

11. For its part, the UK has, since the publication of the comprehensive report, worked with the UN Secretariat and major Troop Contributing Countries, as appropriate, to ensure that all the recommendations are implemented. The UK is systematically looking for opportunities to ensure that language against sexual exploitation and abuse is included in Security Council resolutions and in peacekeeping mandates and reports at both the UN and other international organisations.
12. The UK Ministry of Defence Armed Forces provides training on gender, child protection and human rights issues to all UK military personnel embarking on peacekeeping or similar overseas missions. We are in the process of undertaking an audit of the gender content of Pre-Deployment Training, where necessary, to develop gender awareness training, and raise awareness of the UN Code of Conduct on personal behaviour. Furthermore, we take action against members of our military contingents alleged to have been involved in cases of sexual exploitation and abuse. We encourage all TCCs to consider similar action.
13. In addition to the support already provided to the Secretariat and to DPKO, we aim, at the next session of the C-34, to encourage other member states to support the establishment of conduct and discipline units as a full time dedicated capacity. This will ensure that work undertaken by these units have a long lasting impact. We would also encourage C-34 endorsement for the participation of TCCs in investigations to ensure that any evidence collected is admissible in a national criminal court. We look forward to receiving the Secretary General's comprehensive strategy for assistance to victims of sexual exploitation and abuse. The key to the success of an investigation will be ensuring TCC follow-up.

Concluding Remarks

14. Let me conclude by once again condemning all acts of sexual exploitation and abuse and underlining the UK's resolve to tackle and eliminate the problem of sexual misconduct in all forms, including by personnel in UN peacekeeping missions.