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**STATEMENT BY
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TO THE UNITED NATIONS**

TO THE UNITED NATIONS SECURITY COUNCIL

PUBLIC MEETING ON

**SEXUAL EXPLOITATION AND ABUSE IN UNITED NATIONS
PEACEKEEPING MISSIONS**

NEW YORK, FEBRUARY 23, 2006

**DÉCLARATION DE L'AMBASSADEUR ALLAN ROCK
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À L'OCCASION DE LA SÉANCE PUBLIQUE DU CONSEIL DE SÉCURITÉ

SUR

**L'EXPLOITATION ET LES ABUS SEXUELS COMMIS DANS LE CADRE
DES MISSIONS DE MAINTIEN DE LA PAIX DES NATIONS UNIES**

NEW YORK, LE 23 FÉVRIER 2006

Mr. President,

We welcome this opportunity to speak on this important subject. This debate demonstrates how seriously the UN and its Member States, including the Security Council, take the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping missions. While we consider primary carriage of the issue should remain with the C34 where it most appropriately sits, we agree that the Security Council should be seized with this issue and, in this regard, we welcome today's debate.

Mr President, sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions is among the most appalling forms of breach of trust. It diminishes us all. It undermines the United Nations as an institution. It causes incalculable harm to some of the most vulnerable people in the world. And although these crimes are committed by a small number of people, their abuse taints the loyal and professional service of our valued UN peacekeepers who put their lives at risk on a daily basis for others.

Over the past year, the Secretary General and the Department of Peacekeeping Operations (DPKO) have made considerable efforts to ensure that progress is made on the issue of sexual exploitation and abuse in United Nations peacekeeping missions. Canada strongly supports the measures taken by the Secretary General to implement a zero-tolerance policy on sexual and gender-based violence. Ultimately, the responsibility to prevent sexual exploitation and abuse and to ensure those who perpetrate such acts are held accountable lies with Member States. It is our collective duty to ensure that this policy is enforced and that our peacekeeping and civilian personnel have a better understanding of the zero-tolerance rule.

It is important to note in this context that significant steps have now been taken to bring alleged abusers to account. As of October 2005, more than 221 peacekeepers have been investigated, 10 civilians have been fired, and over 88 uniformed personnel have been repatriated. The establishment of Conduct and Discipline Units in some peacekeeping missions and at UN headquarters is a very positive development. There is an increased number of gender and children advisors included as part of UN peace support missions – though more are necessary. While the mandate of gender advisors is to focus on gender mainstreaming more broadly, they have been involved in training for mission staff on gender-based violence, and particularly sexual exploitation and abuse. Beyond training, they have also been collaborating with conduct and discipline units.

Mr. President,

We also welcome the efforts made by the Secretary General and DPKO to impress upon peacekeeping personnel the UN's message of zero tolerance and zero impunity but remain extremely concerned that problems persist in a number of Missions. The policy and measures taken by the Secretary General will succeed only if we, the Member States, take the appropriate steps to ensure that our personnel deployed on UN peace operations are appropriately trained and are held to the highest standards of conduct and discipline. We urge all Troop Contributing Countries to incorporate training

on sexual exploitation and abuse in their pre-deployment training programs. We are encouraged that a number of fellow Troop contributing Countries are taking rigorous steps in this regard. This sends the right message about the standards of conduct that are expected. That message must be loud and clear, and delivered in unison by member states, DPKO and the global public: this shameful and criminal behaviour must stop.

We welcome as well the excellent and comprehensive report delivered by H.R.H. Prince Zeid Ra'ad Al-Husseini which is a tangible demonstration of the UN's desire to proactively follow through on the Secretary General's Bulletin on this very issue. As a follow-up to this report, DPKO has proposed a number of measures. These include, in particular, both the requirement that public information campaigns be undertaken to combat the "culture of acceptance" which has developed in peacekeeping missions, and the furnishing of support to the empowerment of local women and girls. The latter recommendation is critical, if women and girls are to be in a position to protect themselves from sexual exploitation and abuse, and seek redress when it does occur.

As Under-Secretary-General Jean-Marie Guehenno stated this past October during the Security Council Open Debate on Resolution 1325, "beyond pointing to a series of systemic weaknesses that account for such gross misconduct, [the] problem [of sexual exploitation and abuse] should be a wake-up call for all of us to attach even more importance to incorporating a gender perspective into our work." Canada would add that at the heart of sexual exploitation and abuse issues, there lies a link to questions of discrimination and gender inequality. While the development and implementation of standards, codes of conduct, norms and investigation procedures, are essential to our efforts, this work can not be carried out successfully in the absence of a gender analysis.

We must also closely examine how we can collectively agree on further implementation mechanisms that will take a little longer to fully develop and how to best support them. We strongly support the continued work of the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations on this important issue at its upcoming session. We encourage the Special Committee to support the initiative of National Investigation Officers put forward by the Office of Internal Oversight Services (OIOS), including the methodology for strong, direct and transparent action, while ensuring that national judicial processes are respected. It is imperative that early advice is given to a member state where an allegation has been made against one or more of its personnel, so that swift and effective action can be taken to investigate the allegation and punish those convicted of these crimes. We are confident that the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations will provide further options to implement the Secretary General's policy and Prince Zeid's report.

Canada will ensure that all military, police and civilian personnel sent by our government on UN Missions are well trained, professional and fully aware of their responsibilities and codes of conduct. We know that all countries represented in this room share our objective: to eliminate sexual exploitation and abuse in UN peacekeeping missions. We will only achieve that goal if all Troop Contributing Countries ensure that the highest training standards are followed.

We have heard time and time again of the “wall of silence” with which Prince Zeid and his team have been met when first broaching the topic of sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping missions. This “wall of silence” has kept many sexual abuse cases from being investigated. The work of the Secretary-General, DPKO, OIOS, the Special Committee on Peacekeeping, and troop contributing countries in the past year has shown that when we are mobilized, change can take place. And that change must continue as sexual and gender-based violence continues to threaten women’s human rights and sustainable peace and security. Our rapid and effective action has never been more critical.

Let us therefore commit ourselves anew to vigorous and focussed action, so that we can protect those in vulnerable situations from abuse and exploitation, and restore the reputation of the United Nations, and all who represent it, for integrity and for honourable behaviour.