

LDPKO UN1676

GA A/59/710

United Nations



General Assembly

Distr.: General
24 March 2005

Original: English

Fifty-ninth session

Agenda item 77

**Comprehensive review of the whole question
of peacekeeping operations in all their aspects**

Letter dated 24 March 2005 from the Secretary-General to the President of the General Assembly

United Nations peacekeeping operations have for decades brought peace and stability to countries emerging from war. The women and men who serve the blue flag do so under arduous and often dangerous conditions. The history of peacekeeping has been one of distinguished collective accomplishment and personal sacrifice.

However, this exemplary record has been clouded by the unconscionable conduct of a few individuals. In particular, the revelations in 2004 of sexual exploitation and abuse by a significant number of United Nations peacekeeping personnel in the Democratic Republic of the Congo have done great harm to the name of peacekeeping. Such abhorrent acts are a violation of the fundamental duty of care that all United Nations peacekeeping personnel owe to the local population that they are sent to serve.

As the allegations in the Democratic Republic of the Congo surfaced, it became clear that the measures currently in place to address sexual exploitation and abuse in peacekeeping operations were manifestly inadequate and that a fundamental change in approach was needed. I began a process of review to determine the nature and extent of the problem and resolve it. As a first step, in July 2004, I invited His Royal Highness Prince Zeid Ra'ad Zeid Al-Hussein, Permanent Representative of Jordan, to act as my adviser and assist me in addressing the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. As the Permanent Representative of a major troop- and police-contributing country and a former civilian peacekeeper, Prince Zeid has brought a vital perspective to the problem and potential solutions. Thus, when the Special Committee on Peacekeeping Operations, in its 2005 report (A/59/19), requested me to make available a comprehensive report with recommendations on sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel, I asked Prince Zeid to undertake its preparation. This report I now submit to you. I would be grateful if it could be made available to the members of the General Assembly.

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The report before you represents the first comprehensive analysis of the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel. It contains bold recommendations directed at both the Secretariat and Member States. In formulating the recommendations, Prince Zeid drew on extensive consultations with Secretariat officials and representatives of the troop- and police-contributing countries that provide the most military and police personnel, as well as on insights from a visit to the United Nations peacekeeping operation in the Democratic Republic of the Congo from 24 October to 3 November 2004.

I believe that Prince Zeid's analysis is a fair and honest account of a serious problem. I concur fully with all recommendations relating to the report's four main areas of concern:

- The current rules on standards of conduct
- The investigative process
- Organizational, managerial and command responsibility
- Individual disciplinary, financial and criminal accountability

Resolving the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse by United Nations peacekeeping personnel is a shared responsibility and can only succeed with firm commitment and action by both the Secretariat and Member States. We will need to work closely together and chart a common way forward. I undertake to do my utmost to implement the necessary reforms under my purview, which would go far beyond the initial steps that have been taken to raise awareness in peacekeeping operations of United Nations standards of conduct and to enforce them. I also call upon Member States to act with determination and due haste and to provide the necessary resources to the Secretariat and the United Nations agencies, funds and programmes to put in place the important changes required.

The implementation of the report's recommendations will strengthen the ability of peacekeeping operations to promote good conduct and discipline more broadly and increase the accountability of managers and officers in this area. Since the problem of sexual exploitation and abuse is not confined to peacekeeping contexts, the report also offers many innovative ideas that could be applicable to the wider United Nations system.

United Nations peacekeeping is a noble calling and serves as an integral part of the world's efforts to maintain peace and security. Sexual exploitation and abuse by peacekeeping personnel must first be eliminated and then prevented from happening again. I would like to express my sincere thanks and appreciation to Prince Zeid for producing this report, which I trust will be the starting point to drive forward a process of reform that will achieve this goal.

(Signed) Kofi Annan