Principles on Protection from Sexual Exploitation and Abuse and Sexual Harassment for United States Government Engagement with International Organizations

Guided by the following principles, the United States Government will engage the United Nations and other International Organizations to undertake specific and concrete actions to ensure their efforts to prevent and respond to sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment (SEAH) are as effective and consistent as possible. These principles will promote greater coherence, transparency, and accountability across the United Nations System and other International Organizations, including ensuring U.S. Government funding is used in a transparent manner.

Zero Tolerance

The United States will continue to promote the full implementation of policies of zero tolerance for sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment, including zero tolerance for inaction in response to allegations, across the United Nations and other International Organizations. This includes support for policies that prioritize prevention and mitigation efforts, monitor the effectiveness of such efforts, ensure safe access to confidential SEAH reporting mechanisms and appropriate survivor support, and embed survivor-centered principles across all actions in response to reported allegations – including investigations. The United States recognizes that an absence of reporting does not mean incidents are not being perpetrated, nor does it indicate that zero tolerance policies are being fully implemented.

Survivor-centered Approach

The United States expects all allegations or incidents of sexual exploitation and abuse and sexual harassment to be reviewed and addressed, while respecting principles of due process. In its engagement with the United Nations and other International Organizations, the United States will continue to advocate for the use of survivor-centered principles and standards – an approach that recognizes and empowers survivors as individuals with agency and unique needs, safeguarding their dignity and wellbeing.

Prevention and Risk Mitigation

The United States will work with the United Nations and other International Organizations to institutionalize prevention and mitigation measures that go beyond basic awareness-raising, training, capacity-building or dissemination of codes of conduct, and include a commitment to promote adequate funding, dedicated technical staff, and meaningful risk analysis and mitigation. The United States will hold the United Nations and other International Organizations to the highest standard, including from the onset of a crisis, conflict or emergency, to mitigate against such risk, especially with highly vulnerable populations.

Accountability and Transparency

The United States expects the leadership of the United Nations and other International Organizations to take meaningful action to support accountability and transparency through, among others, the following: the conduct of timely and survivor-centered investigations; response efforts driven by the needs, experiences, and resiliencies of those most at risk of SEAH; clear reporting and response systems, including to inform Member States of allegations or incidents; and accountability measures, including termination of employment or involvement of law enforcement, as needed.

Organizational Culture Change

The United States will work to advocate for the development by the United Nations and other International Organizations of evidence-based metrics and standards of practice in the implementation of zero tolerance policies, promote holistic approaches, empower women and girls, and reinforce leadership and organizational accountability. Policies, statements, and training are essential, but alone are insufficient to produce lasting positive change. Systems   level change requires a shift in organizational culture, behavior, and the underlying processes and mechanisms to deliver assistance and promote internal accountability.

Empowerment of Local Communities

The United States will prioritize, in partnership with the leadership of the United Nations and other International Organizations, the critical importance of locally-led efforts, particularly those led by women and girls, who, when meaningfully supported and engaged, can inform the measures that may mitigate risks and promote safer foreign assistance programming.