



United Nations Secretary-General

New York

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Secretary-General's remarks at press stakeout

“Ladies and gentlemen,
I would like to say a few words about sexual harassment, which is rightly gaining the attention and visibility it deserves.
I reaffirm my total commitment to the UN’s zero tolerance policy on sexual harassment.

I am well aware of the male-dominated culture that permeates governments, the private sector, international organisations and even areas of civil society.

This creates obstacles to upholding zero tolerance policies on sexual harassment, including here at the United Nations.
I am determined to remove them.

Sexual harassment, like sexual abuse and sexual violence, is rooted in the historic power imbalances between men and women.
That is why equal rights and representation are so important, and that is why I launched a gender parity strategy at the UN.

I am pleased to announce that for the first time in United Nations history, we have now reached parity in the UN Senior Management Group.
That means 50-50 among the top leaders of the UN Secretariat. In fact, it is slightly higher – we currently in the Senior Management Group have 23 women and 21 men.

This is a start.
Equality at all levels, in line with the road map approved, is critical to taking on the challenge of sexual harassment.
We are addressing it with five concrete steps.

First, we are committed to taking every allegation seriously -- past and present. I am pleased to see a strong institutional response from UN agencies in recent weeks.

Second, we must make sure all staff affected by harassment know what to do and where to go for help. We are launching a new helpline for staff within the Secretariat who seek confidential advice. This will be operational by mid-February.

Third, I have established a Task Force of leaders from across the UN system to step up efforts to tackle harassment and boost support for victims. A Rapid Response Team is producing key guidance, information and services – with an emphasis on improving support for victims. We have also enhanced our mandatory training on this issue.

Fourth, I have strengthened the protection of whistleblowers and reminded staff of their duty to call out sexual harassment and to support those affected.

And, fifth, we will shortly be undertaking a survey among Secretariat staff to give us better information on prevalence and reporting rates.

In this effort and beyond, my message is simple: we will not tolerate sexual harassment anytime, anywhere.

And we will continue to change the dynamic and put greater power into the hands of women to prevent and end sexual harassment and all abuse of power in the UN.

Thank you.”
