



Miranda Brown
Geneva, Switzerland

Rijnstraat 8
2515 XP Den Haag
Postbus 20061
2500 EB Den HaagThe Hague
The Netherlands

www.rijksoverheid.nl

Our reference
Min-BuZa.2018.678-157 Cc

Date 31-08-2018
Re Your letter of 27 August 2018

Encl.

Dear Ms Brown,

Thank you for your letter of 27 August, addressed to Minister Blok and Minister Kaag and for sharing your concerns regarding the decision of the Dutch government to award the Human Rights Tulip 2018 to outgoing UN High Commissioner for Human Rights Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein. The ministers have taken due note of your objection. With this letter, I would like to address your concerns and elaborate on The Netherlands' work on whistleblower protection, on the prevention of Sexual Exploitation and Abuse (SEA), and on ending impunity in this regard.

The Netherlands underscores the importance of whistleblower protection and a safe working environment where criticism has a place. We address this matter both domestically and internationally, including by supporting various whistleblowers platforms where citizens can share sensitive information anonymously.

With regard to SEA in particular, the Dutch government has strongly condemned sexual exploitation and abuse by UN personnel and has consistently expressed concern about the weak response to allegations as well as the lack of protection of whistleblowers. A well-functioning reporting mechanism, including whistleblower protection, is indispensable for an adequate response to any misconduct or breach of ethics.

Prime Minister Mark Rutte of the Netherlands is a member of the Circle of Leadership on the prevention of and response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse in United Nations operations (CoL), made up of global leaders who actively support this agenda. The Netherlands is committed to end impunity, to strengthen measures to prevent SEA, to respond rapidly and decisively to credible reports of such acts, and to meet the needs of victims quickly and appropriately.

Unfortunately, SEA remains a challenge. And whistleblowers are still too vulnerable. We hear the calls to do more and better. The need for action is clearly understood. The Netherlands and the United Kingdom have taken the initiative for a Technical Working Group for a coordinated approach of major donor countries

on SEA and harassment towards all stakeholders in the development and peacekeeping sector, including the UN and specialized agencies.

Moreover, the Dutch government supports the efforts of the UN Secretary-General for further measures to protect whistleblowers and to prevent retaliatory measures against whistleblowers. We remain committed to cooperate with the Secretary-General on this matter. This is also expressed in a letter to the UN Secretary-General, signed by the Netherlands and like-minded countries in March 2018. The Netherlands believes that in all cases where a whistleblower exposes a case of SEA, an independent investigation must take place in which all relevant aspects are investigated.

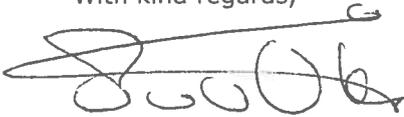
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The decision to award the Human Rights Tulip to Zeid Ra'ad Al Hussein is based on his personal commitment and unwavering support for human rights defenders during his mandate as UN High Commissioner.

I once again would like to thank you for bringing this matter to our attention. We value the opportunity to address some of the concerns expressed in your letter. If you so wish, the Permanent Representative of the Kingdom of the Netherlands in Geneva can elaborate further on this letter in a personal meeting with you.

With kind regards,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'P. van der Vliet', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Peter van der Vliet
Director Multilateral Organizations and Human Rights