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Dear Resident Coordinators,

As you are aware, the Secretary-General wrote to all United Nations staff on 21 November 2013 to renew the commitment of the United Nations to the responsibilities assigned to it under the Charter where people are at risk of or subject to serious violations of human rights or humanitarian law. The Secretary-General's communication began a series of steps foreseen by the 2012 Internal Review Panel report on United Nations action in Sri Lanka to ensure that the lessons of the past are fully learned and acted upon. This initiative is called *Rights up Front*.

Rights up Front seeks to ensure that the United Nations leverages the full breadth of its mandates to help protect people at risk or subject to serious violations of international human rights or humanitarian law. It is worth recalling the dictum that there can be no peace without development, no development without peace, and there can be neither without human rights. When there are serious and large scale violations, the results are devastating not only for individuals, but also for long-term economic and social development in entire regions. In seeking to strengthen our prevention of large scale human rights violations, Rights Up Front goes to the heart of our responsibilities as United Nations staff, including as development actors.

Rights up Front asks that you and your Country Teams, while continuing your support for the coordination of United Nations development and humanitarian activities, also give careful attention to serious human rights concerns. You are the first line of United Nations action, engaging every day with national authorities, civil society and beneficiaries in your many duty stations. You are in a unique position to recognize changing events on the ground, to use your effective working relationships to understand the concerns of national counterparts and to recognize the vibrations caused by human rights violations that serve as early indicators of a deteriorating situation.

While the initial early warning of the United Nations and preventive actions are often led by you, Rights Up Front creates a framework to ensure that RCs and UNCTs do not carry the human rights responsibility alone. It is designed to ensure that we act as a coherent United Nations exercising our moral and political responsibility at all levels.

From a field perspective, Rights Up Front provides for two broad sets of actions:

- Firstly, it requires that every UNCT be aware of any serious human rights risk factors; and it asks you to recognize and address these risks in CCAs, UNDAFs, CAPs, Flash Appeals and, as appropriate, in advocacy with national authorities. Rights Up Front provides that RCs and UNCTs will have access to analysis and assessment support at headquarters when needed.
- Secondly, Rights Up Front recognizes that in some situations, a UNCT may be unable to take these early actions because of local circumstances e.g. where a situation deteriorates significantly and RCs may be faced with extremely difficult choices between the wider development roles of the United Nations and the new dynamic, with its risk of violations. If a situation becomes more complex, Rights Up Front ensures that UNHQ shares the burden for meeting the moral and political responsibilities of the United Nations and ensures that a United Nations system-wide strategy to address potential or actual serious violations leverages the combined capacities of the United Nations System. Its intention is to ensure RCs and UNCTs facing complex situations on the ground receive the full support from UNHQ. Support from headquarters can include assuming accountability for the overall United Nations response, deploying additional field staff such as Human Rights Advisors and Peace and Development Advisors to support the UNCT with analysis, taking on the burden of raising serious concerns with the State authorities, and the design and implementation of a strategy of engagement with member States.

To ensure Rights up Front is complementary to other crisis coordination processes, efforts are being made to adjust, streamline and systematize existing mechanisms. The Secretary-General's Policy Committee will review this in the coming months.

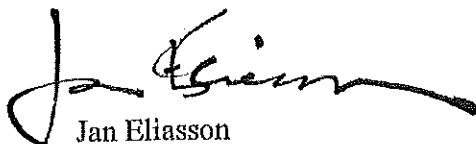
Through this letter, we are seeking your commitment to take forward relevant elements of the Rights up Front Action Plan. This role begins at the prevention stage. It continues through to the most acute situations when we will need to ensure that the programme criticality framework is rolled out and that we are able to stay and deliver to protect civilians from atrocities.

Using existing tools, all United Nations entities will hold their staff accountable, particularly those in the most senior positions, for fulfilling their responsibilities with respect to serious violations of international human rights and humanitarian law. For this initiative to succeed, it is essential that every staff member of the United Nations understand what the commitment of the United Nations to human rights means for the organization and themselves; we count on your support to ensure this is the case. Training programmes are currently being developed for all levels of staff.

Rights up Front will of course have to be contextualized according to each country context. In this light, we encourage you to hold discussions with your Country Teams and ensure that each organization is aware of its responsibilities under the plan, and to share with us the highlights of your discussions and suggestions.

We look forward to discussing Rights up Front with you further during the Global Management Meeting in early March. We rely on your full support, and you and your UN Country Team can in turn count on the full support of UN headquarters to make this initiative the success it needs to be. Rights Up Front speaks to the essence of our Organization and the Charter. Let us make it a reality in our day to day work.

Yours sincerely,



Jan Eliasson



Helen Clark