



June 1, 2020

Mr. António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
UN Secretariat
One United Nations Plaza
New York, NY 10017

Open Letter

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

You have [described](#) eradicating “the appalling crimes of sexual violence and exploitation committed under the UN flag” as the first item on your reform agenda. In your inaugural speech before the General Assembly, you promised “structural, legal, and operational measures to make the zero-tolerance policy ... a reality.”

Every allegation, you have [said](#), “undermines our values and principles and the sacrifice of those who serve with pride and professionalism in some of the most dangerous places in the world.”

Yet the UN's highest-ranking official dedicated to addressing the issue—Ms. Jane Holl Lute, who serves at the Under-Secretary-General level—appears to be no longer actively engaged in her role.

Ms. Lute has not made a trip to a peacekeeping country—outside of Cyprus—since April 2016. She seems not to have made a public appearance or statement on sexual exploitation and abuse since 2018.

We are forced to question your seriousness on this gravest of matters. The UN’s effort to end sexual exploitation and abuse by its own personnel has been shown, once again, to be little more than a public-relations exercise intended to mislead the public—and Member States—into believing that genuine action is occurring.

Ms. Lute has held the position of Special Coordinator on Improving the United Nations Response to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse since February 2016, when she was [appointed](#) by your predecessor, Ban Ki-moon. In January 2017, you [extended](#) the appointment.

The Special Coordinator’s [job](#) is “to align approaches, enhance coordination, cooperation and coherence system-wide through the development of aligned mechanisms and procedures, standardized protocols and tools.”

Ms. Lute “drives and oversees” your effort on this issue. She stands at the pinnacle of the UN’s battle against sexual exploitation and abuse.

And yet in May 2017, Ms. Lute transitioned from working full time to serving as a part-time “when actually employed” official, according to paragraph 26 in the [report](#) of the UN’s Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions. She is based out of her Washington, D.C. home.

In August 2018, you appointed Ms. Lute to be a special envoy to Cyprus. As even a cursory Google search reveals, Ms. Lute has devoted considerable time—and several overseas trips—to that role. In addition, Ms. Lute serves as president and CEO of SICPA North America, “a company that specializes in providing solutions to protect the integrity and value of products, processes, and documents.” She currently sits on the board of directors of *four* separate entities, earning considerable [compensation](#): Marsh and McLennan Companies, the Center for Internet Security, Union Pacific Corporation, and Atlas Air Worldwide Holdings.

In recent months, Ms. Lute has dedicated significant public effort to promoting her work as a cybersecurity expert. On May 17, she co-wrote an [op-ed](#) for *The Washington Post*—“Now is the perfect time for a cyberattack. Here’s how to stop one” was the headline—that identified her as deputy secretary for Homeland Security from 2009 to 2013 and board member for the Center for Internet Security. Her position as Special Coordinator went unmentioned.

Ms. Lute is a frequent public speaker. On March 11, she spoke animatedly on “our growing connectivity” during a public discussion of cyber matters at the Atlantic Council in Washington, D.C. She is represented by the Harry Walker Agency, “the world’s leading speakers bureau.” Her biography on the agency’s [website](#) says that she “now” focuses “on cyberterrorism, the source of today’s most menacing threats to nations, businesses and individuals.” While the biography mentions her history of work with the UN, it does not cite her position as Special Coordinator.

On March 13—two days after her talk at the Atlantic Council—Ms. Lute was absent during the UN [briefing](#) on the newest report on Special Measures for protection from sexual exploitation and abuse. Jane Connors, the UN’s Victims’ Rights Advocate, appeared in her stead.

And so we ask of you: How much time does Ms. Lute dedicate to her role? How much has she been paid since she began as Special Coordinator? How much was she paid in 2019? During her constant absences, who is assigned to fulfill her role? To whom does the highest-ranking person in the Special Coordinator’s office report? Who fills out that person’s performance evaluation? What is the budget for the Special Coordinator’s office? What is the reporting structure?

But the larger question is: How can sexual exploitation and abuse be a priority of your tenure when your top official is only an occasional employee?

This plain fact is, unfortunately, an indictment of your leadership on the vitally important issue of sexual exploitation and abuse committed by UN personnel.

Sincerely,



Paula Donovan
Co-Director, AIDS-Free World



Stephen Lewis
Co-Director, AIDS-Free World