



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 17 July 2017
(OR. en)

11332/17

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OUTCOME OF PROCEEDINGS

From: General Secretariat of the Council
On: 17 July 2017
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 11015/17

Subject: EU priorities at the United Nations and the 72nd United Nations General Assembly (September 2017 - September 2018)

Delegations will find in the annex the EU priorities at the United Nations and the 72nd United Nations General Assembly (September 2017 – September 2018), as adopted by the Council at its 3557th meeting held on 17 July 2017.

**EU priorities at the United Nations and the 72nd United Nations General Assembly
(September 2017 – September 2018)**

Reinvigorating Multilateralism

Today, as much as ever, the European Union will engage to bolster multilateralism. *The Global Strategy on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy*¹ affirms that the EU will strive for a strong United Nations as the bedrock of the multilateral rules-based order.² As the EU faces a period of opportunities and challenges ahead, it will stand up and support the United Nations. Today is also the time to defend and promote European core values and interests.

Over the past year we have seen a new dynamic. The new UN Secretary General, Antonio Guterres, set out three priorities (i.e. conflict prevention; sustainable development; and management reform) which coincide with the objectives of the Union's external action and as set out in the EU Global Strategy. The EU is a strong supporter of the new UN reform agenda and has a strategic interest to keep up the momentum for change.

¹ Global Strategy on the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, 2016 – further referred to as EU Global Strategy.

² Also in the principles and objectives of the Union's external action as outlined in Article 21 of the Treaty on the European Union.

We have also seen impressive achievements. The historic deal with Iran on its nuclear programme, the leading role the EU played in the Paris Climate Agreement, the adoption of the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals and, most recently, the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants show that a united, bold and confident EU can shape the global order. The EU and the UN are indispensable partners to deliver peace and security, advancing human rights and sustainable development and, thus, change our lives for the better. The Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) for 2030 provide a common positive agenda for transformation as well as a structural framework for measuring our policies at global, regional and national level.

The coming year will be about EU's engagement together with our partners as a positive force for change.

There are serious global challenges ahead of us. In an unpredictable world of unprecedented interdependence, economic and geopolitical volatility, terrorism across the globe, increasingly linked conflicts, transboundary threats and megatrends including public health threats, pressure on natural resources and climate change, irregular migration and forced displacement, multilateralism is key to deliver global solutions. It also represents a positive outlook on the world bringing people together. The EU supports the UN as a global convenor and enabler of solutions across all policy areas. There is a unique added-value of the UN to our citizens.

At a time when multilateralism is needed the most, the UN and the rules based global order is under increased pressure from various quarters. Therefore, in the coming year the **key EU priority will be to uphold, strengthen and reform the UN** and the rules based global order. In this spirit, the EU will aim at a strong EU-UN partnership. The EU will also seek to keep up the political momentum for reform and make the UN more responsive, politically and operationally, at all levels.

Multilateralism needs to deliver much better at the country level. We are facing the largest humanitarian crisis with more than 20 million people across four countries – Yemen, Lake Chad Basin, South Sudan and Somalia – facing starvation and famine. The interplay between today's conflicts and broader megatrends calls for a broader vision of prevention aimed at building resilience. The EU will support and shape UN action by seeking a joined up approach across the pillars in support of prevention.

Europe will show unity of purpose in making this coming year an opportunity to reinvigorate multilateralism.

Recognizing the importance of the United Nations at the core of multilateralism, the European Union and its Member States³, for the duration of the 72nd session of the General Assembly of the United Nations, will focus on the following **interlinked and mutually reinforcing priorities** under three main headings:

I. STRONGER GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

II. PEACE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

III. AN ENDURING AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMATION

Gender equality and women's empowerment as well as women, peace and security will be mainstreamed into all three priority areas.

³ Throughout this document the use of 'EU' does not prejudice whether the competence lies with the 'EU', the 'EU and its Member States' or exclusively with 'Member States'.

I. STRONGER GLOBAL GOVERNANCE

We need an effective global governance system. Guided by the values on which it is founded and the principles of the EU external action, the EU is committed to a global order based on international law, including the principles of the UN Charter, which ensure peace, human rights, sustainable development and lasting access to the global commons. This commitment translates into an aspiration to transform rather than simply preserve the existing system⁴.

A commitment to stronger global governance translates in determination to reform the UN. The three reform tracks (peace and security, development, management and reform) should be addressed together since they will be mutually reinforcing. Management reforms will be necessary to underpin and complement reform proposals on peace and security and development. The EU will strive for clarity, transparency, efficiency, effectiveness and s accountability as the key principles guiding UN action. This is of utmost importance to restore citizens' and Member States' trust in the ability of the UN system to prevent, respond to crises and to promote a rules' based global order.

Governance, development and peace and security are intimately linked. The UN development system needs a complete reorientation to support the 2030 Agenda including in relation to conflict prevention and sustaining peace. This must include increased integration and accountability recognizing that the current model is fragmented. Increased coherence and greater synergies between development, humanitarian and peace-building activities should be ensured upfront and at the country level – including through a strengthened resident coordinator system - especially as today's crises require a multidimensional approach. The Quadrennial Comprehensive Policy Review (QCPR)⁵ will be essential to make the UN system "fit for purpose" to deliver on the transformative 2030 Agenda.

⁴ EU Global Strategy

⁵ Resolution (71/243) on the QCPR of UN operational activities for development adopted by the General Assembly adopted on 21 December 2016.

The EU and its Member States will help the UNSG to muster support from UN Member States, to achieve greater cooperation on reform. Empowering the UNSG to deliver on his reform proposals will be the key challenge in the coming year. Now is the time for the UN to prove its relevance and value added. This will require changes to UN culture, strategy, structures and operations. It will be important for the UN to reach out to all partners, broadening the conversations and investing in new alliances. The EU will use its political and diplomatic outreach to build a coalition in support of UN reform.

A commitment to stronger global governance translates also in reform of the bodies and organs of the UN system, including the comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council as well as the revitalisation of the work of the General Assembly, better aligning the work of its committees with the 2030 Agenda. Multilateralism must not lead to inaction and we all need to contribute to rebuilding trust in the UN's capacity to deliver.

II. PEACE AND CONFLICT PREVENTION

Preventing rising global insecurity is a pressing challenge. Today's crisis situations last longer and have become increasingly complex and volatile. The EU emphasizes the need to invest in upstream conflict prevention and to plan for post peacekeeping scenarios while recognizing that peacekeeping and Special Political Missions remain at the core of the UN's mandate.

As a partner to the UN, the EU has an important track record in promoting democracy, peace and human rights, the rule of law, economic opportunities, stabilisation: all critical for the prevention of violence. Resilience is a cornerstone of the EU Global Strategy.

The UN Secretary General has laid out a broad vision of conflict prevention targeting current and future risks. This goes beyond violent conflicts and terrorism, to megatrends such as climate change, food insecurity, irregular migration and forced displacement, youth unemployment and cyber security threats. At the same time and building on the processes agreed by the UN Security Council and General Assembly under the label of "sustaining peace", the UN Secretary General pledged a surge in diplomacy. Preventing conflicts is more effective when preventive action is taken early. As such it is important that Early Warning analysis be incorporated into wider decision making to ensure current and future risks are addressed with early and appropriate action. This means ensuring that peace and security on the one hand and human rights on the other hand are viewed as integral to successful conflict prevention. The UN system and its peace and security architecture will only be strengthened if it takes into account the UN's work on human rights and protection, which places the individual at the centre of its response.

The importance of women's meaningful participation and empowerment across the spectrum of prevention cannot be overstated. Women especially play a pivotal role in mediation and peace agreements. We need to foster women's participation in peace processes in order to increase the success and sustainability of peace initiatives. The EU will continue its engagement on the Women, Peace and Security agenda and will foster the full implementation of all the UN Security Council Resolutions on Women, Peace and Security.

It is equally important to support an enabling environment for civil society and its effective participation in the work of the UN – a powerful actor in the promotion and protection of human rights on the ground, and a swift alert/conflict prevention mechanism in the multilateral context.

There are synergies between the EU Global Strategy and the UN vision of prevention as the golden thread that needs to run through all UN activities. We strive to strengthen the EU-UN partnership on prevention. EU and UN engagement needs to be underpinned by concerted political strategies. While there is, in principle, support for more upstream prevention amongst the UN Member States, concerns remain. The EU and its Member States can play a role in mitigating these concerns. The EU will continue its steadfast support for atrocity prevention, protection of civilians and the Responsibility to Protect principle.

The EU will also step up its engagement with the Youth, Peace and Security agenda (UNSCR 2250), including through EU involvement in the UNSC-commissioned progress study on Youth, Peace and Security and through exploring opportunities for regular policy and operational cooperation on this matter.

Zero tolerance with regard to sexual exploitation and abuse must be the norm in all UN activities.

Preventive diplomacy and mediation efforts must be stepped up and the United Nations Alliance of Civilisations has a role to play in this context.

Countering Terrorism, Including Preventing Violent Extremism

The UN plays a key role in **countering terrorism, including the prevention of violent extremism and measures to strengthen cybersecurity**. The EU welcomes the reform of the UN Counter Terrorism architecture adopted by the UN General Assembly adopted on 15 June which aims to simplify, allows for clearer leadership, better coordination and increased effectiveness of UN CT actions including fight against radicalisation and actions in the field of countering terrorist narratives, the fight against the use of internet for terrorist purposes and other measures to strengthen cybersecurity.

The EU and the UN are committed to strengthen their partnership in the global fight against terrorism and in the protection of victims in full respect of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The EU reaffirms the importance of a balanced approach across all four pillars of the UN Global Counter Terrorism Strategy. The EU supports the UN Prevention of Violent Extremism Action Plan and the recommendation to help draft national and regional Prevention of Violent Extremism action plans.

We support the UN in making counter-terrorism a key element of its prevention agenda in line with the EU engagement in preventive measures to combat terrorism and counter violent extremism.

Responding to crises

Many critical country situations require robust international action, including the following countries and regions.

The EU will continue to support the UN led talks in Geneva for a political settlement that can bring about a genuine political transition, based on relevant UNSC Resolutions. The EU **Syria** Strategy and the outcome of the Brussels Conference of 5 April 2017 are the framework for further initiatives the EU will take. Only once an inclusive political transition is firmly underway will the EU be able to assist with the reconstruction of Syria.

The **Middle East Peace Process** remains a top priority for the EU. The EU remains united in its commitment to achieving the two-state solution. The EU will work together with the UN and the Security Council towards this aim.

In **Libya**, the EU will continue to provide substantial support to the Government of National Accord in key areas coordinating its action with the UN. The EU will continue to support UN-led initiatives aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement. The EU will engage with the UN, the African Union and the League of Arab States in the Libya Quartet. The EU will also continue its efforts in support of UN Security Council resolutions, in particular UNSCR 2292, notably through EUNAVFOR MED Sophia.

The EU will continue reiterating its support for **Ukraine's** independence, unity, sovereignty and territorial integrity. It will continue to call on all sides for the implementation of the Minsk agreements and for support of OSCE action aiming at a peaceful settlement of the conflict underlining Russia's responsibility. The EU will continue to call on all the Parties involved to fully commit towards implementing a genuine lasting ceasefire and to engage constructively in the conflict resolution negotiations. The EU will continue to strongly condemn the illegal annexation of Crimea and Sevastopol to the Russian Federation in line with UNGA Resolution 68/262 and call for the implementation of UNGA Resolution 71/205, in particular the need for access to the peninsula by international Human Rights monitoring missions.

The EU is also extremely concerned about the catastrophic humanitarian situation in **Yemen**. Only a political solution can bring a lasting peace. The EU will continue to urge all parties to renew the cessation of hostilities and re-engage in peace talks facilitated by the UN Special Envoy.

Furthermore in Africa, the situation in Mali, Lake Chad basin, Somalia, Sudan and South Sudan as well as in the Central Africa Republic and in the Democratic Republic of Congo will remain a priority for the EU.

Disarmament and Non-proliferation

The proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and their means of delivery is a threat to global security. The EU will work towards a better implementation of UN Security Council Resolution 1540, complemented by Resolution 2325 adopted in December 2016, as a key element of the international non-proliferation architecture.

The EU will continue to promote universalisation and full implementation of the existing multilateral disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control treaties and regimes.

The Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT) remains the cornerstone of the global nuclear non-proliferation regime the essential foundation for the pursuit of disarmament in accordance with Article VI of the NPT and an important element in the future development of nuclear energy applications for peaceful purposes. At the start of a new review cycle, our priority is to uphold and preserve the NPT as a key multilateral instrument, to promote its universalisation and strengthen its implementation. The Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT) is of crucial importance to nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation and its entry into force and universalisation remain top priorities for the EU.

The EU remains united and committed to treaty-based nuclear disarmament and arms control and reiterates its call for the necessity, more than ever, to overcome the longstanding deadlock of the Conference on Disarmament.

The EU will promote the importance of the full implementation of the Chemical Weapons Convention (CWC) and its universalisation and work to end the unacceptable use of chemical weapons in the Middle East. The EU supports the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) through significant financial contributions and related action. The EU will promote the full implementation of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BWC), its universalisation and national implementation.

The EU has a long-standing commitment to the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The EU is committed to the Antipersonnel Mine Ban Treaty and make significant contributions to its universalisation and implementation. The EU considers the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) a landmark instrument which provides for robust and effective common international standards for the regulation of the international trade in conventional arms, making it more responsible and transparent and reducing the illicit trade of arms and their diversion. The EU supports the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) as well as the non-proliferation of biological weapons and through significant financial contributions and related action. The EU strives to end the unacceptable use of chemical weapons in the Middle East in accordance with relevant UN Security Council resolutions, inter alia by supporting the OPCW Fact-Finding Missions and the OPCW-UN Joint Investigative Mechanism. The EU is committed to promoting its universalization and effective implementation, including to States which are major exporters and/or importers and to transit states.

The EU is fully committed to supporting the implementation and operationalization of the UN Programme of Action (PoA) on small arms and light weapons (SALW) and the International Tracing Instrument which remain essential for further action to tackle illicit SALW, especially in light of the Third Review Conference in 2018.

III. AN ENDURING AGENDA FOR TRANSFORMATION

Peace and security are indivisible from sustainable development, global norms and rules-based international systems. Safeguarding our universal values and the pursuit of the EU's interests go hand in hand.

Africa

This year will be a **defining year for the partnership between Europe and Africa**. Africa is a strategic partner for the EU across all policy areas and the EU wants to support Africa in realising its full potential. The 2030 Agenda provides us with a common plan. Africa's own Agenda 2063 envisions a peaceful, secure and prosperous Africa. The 5th Africa-EU Summit due to take place in Abidjan in November 2017 provides a critical opportunity to respond to the rapidly evolving global context and deepen the Africa-EU partnership building on the Joint Africa EU Strategy established in 2007 and guided by political frameworks developed since then paying particular attention to the aspirations and needs of youth and to job creation.

The African group and the African Union (AU) in the UN are key allies to strengthen the role of the UN and the rule-based global order. There will be a need for African-led solutions to strengthen multilateral institutions. Such cooperation will seek to reform and strengthen multilateral institutions, and develop agreements norms and actions in response to global challenges such as climate change, epidemics, pressure on natural resources as well as migration and human mobility and humanitarian crises. Likewise it will serve to promote and support the rule of law and justice at the international level, including ensuring justice and accountability for the most serious crimes, in compliance with principles set out in the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court.⁶ The cooperation between the EU and Africa will also contribute to create an economic environment attractive for private investors who will engage in sustainable development and inclusive growth.

Never before the EU interests have been so intertwined with Africa. At the UN, the EU will promote its strategic interest to deepen its partnership with Africa, including through the United Nations Office in Nairobi (UNON), the main UN hub in Africa. And together with the UN, the EU will engage further with the AU and African partners in exploring ways to further support peace and security in Africa, including as regards the development of the Peace and Security Architecture.

⁶ Joint Communication on A Renewed impetus of the Africa-EU partnership, 2017.

Human rights

The EU is strongly committed to the United Nations Human Rights system and will remain actively engaged at the UN Human Rights Council (HRC) and the Third Committee of the General Assembly to defend and promote the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of human rights. Consistent with EU support for a global order based on international and human rights law, as set out in the EU Strategic Framework on Human Rights and Democracy and the EU Global Strategy on Foreign and Security Policy, the EU will continue to draw the attention of these fora to human rights violations and abuses worldwide, and the need for accountability and to fight impunity. The EU will also seek to highlight positive experiences where action was taken to prevent or remedy human rights violations and abuses.⁷

Building on the close EU-UN partnership on **human rights** the EU will foster the promotion and protection of human rights, fundamental freedoms, rule of law and democracy worldwide. Recognising that the respect for human rights is a pre-requisite for sustainable peace and development, the EU will support the mainstreaming of human rights throughout the UN system. We will continue building cross-regional alliances to advance our thematic human rights priorities and take up country situations that require the attention of the UN.

Humanitarian principles and respect for international humanitarian law

The EU strongly supports the UN central and overall coordinating role in promoting a coherent international response to humanitarian crises. Given today's pressing needs and increasingly complex crises, we will build upon our shared commitment to preserve and strengthen the humanitarian space. Taking our partnership forward, we will work together towards strengthening the humanitarian system and making the response more efficient and effective, in line with the commitments undertaken at the first-ever World Humanitarian Summit in 2016.

⁷ 5689/17 - Council Conclusions on EU Priorities at UN Human Rights Fora in 2017 - Council conclusions (27 February 2017)

The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

The adoption of the **2030 Agenda** was a hugely significant milestone in the international community's collective approach to the eradication of poverty and the achievement of sustainable development. The EU reaffirms its support for the implementation of the Agenda where we will play a leading role, through our external and other policies. The EU also stresses its commitment to achieve the 17 SDGs by 2030. The EU sees the SDGs as an extraordinary opportunity and as a common reference point to prioritise future efforts to benefit prosperity, the planet, people, peace and partnership around the world, especially in the developing countries. As part of this, the EU and its Member States have recently agreed a new, shared, joint vision for their development policy: a European Consensus on Development.⁸ The new Consensus reflects the new framework of external action provided by the Lisbon Treaty and also relates to the EU Global Strategy. It updates the vision of development policy to take account of the 2030 Agenda, of which Addis Ababa Action Agenda is an integral part, and also seeks a coordinated implementation of the Paris Agreement on Climate Change, as well as a coordinated approach to other changes in the global context. The EU will foster the involvement of the private sector and multi-stakeholder partnerships in the implementation of the SDGs encouraging business enterprises to implement the UN Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights and involving a broad range of key stakeholders mobilising key knowledge, capacity and resources. The EU will continue to support the UN's efforts to realign the UN development system in order to reach the goals set by the 2030 Agenda. The EU as a major development actor will engage and play a leadership role. More broadly, sustained political leadership for reform remains crucial.

The implementation of the 2030 Agenda will be the blueprint for action in the years ahead across all the pillars of the UN. For example, the 2030 Agenda as whole is well-designed to underpin broader prevention, notably because of its commitment to leave no one behind. Eradicating poverty and promoting sustainable development, strengthening community, state and societal resilience and addressing drivers of conflict, in line with the resilience approach anchored in the EU Global Strategy, will remain equally important.

⁸ 10108/17.

Migrants and refugees

With the increasing number of **migrants and refugees** arriving to Europe over the last years, the EU is working to put in place a holistic approach to migration and forced displacement, fully embedding the issue in our overall foreign policy relations. The Partnership Framework is an innovative EU-approach providing an umbrella for our cooperation on migration with third countries at a bilateral level, fully respecting humanitarian and human rights obligations. The Partnership Framework is based on ownership, shared responsibility and – as the name implies – partnership. It deepens the way the EU, together with its Member States, addresses the challenges and opportunities related to migration, including irregular migration and its root causes, as part of broader cooperation with third countries of origin and transit. With the Communication "Lives in Dignity" from April 2016 the EU has adopted a new approach on forced displacement and development. The objective is to promote early engagement of humanitarian, development and political actors, in full respect of humanitarian principles, and a focus on sustainable self-reliance of the forcibly displaced and their host communities.

The EU was a driving force behind the New York Declaration for Refugees and Migrants using all its convening power to reach an agreement. The New York Declaration is a balanced basis for collective, multilateral action which reflects our commitment to a rights-based international system and which firmly links the management of the immediate, multi-faceted challenges of migration and forced displacement with the new development paradigm, as enshrined in Agenda 2030. This year will be crucial to push forward the negotiations for the UN Global Compact on Migration and the development of the Global Compact for Refugees and the Comprehensive Refugees Framework with pilot countries, to which the EU is a lead contributor. The EU will use all its political and diplomatic leverage to achieve an ambitious, balanced, equitable outcome.

Climate change

Climate change is one of the most urgent domestic and foreign policy issues facing us today. Its potentially destabilising impacts – including on migration, food security, reliable access to resources, water and energy, the spread of epidemic disease and social and economic instability – make it a threat multiplier. Both the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda underline the far-reaching impact of climate change on the resilience of communities. The EU supports a strong role for the UN in identifying and analysing security related risks linked to climate change.

The implementation of the 2015 **Paris Agreement** will be key to shape the global order. The EU will focus on promoting its universal ratification and ambitious implementation while continuing to show leadership to encourage all the parties to maintain a high level of commitment. The Facilitative Dialogue next year will be an important political milestone. It will be the first opportunity after Paris to look at our collective effort to limit global warming, and what we have done concretely in terms of delivering on the commitments made in Paris.

Oceans governance

This issue is now high on the international agenda due to issues such as human pressure on oceans' natural resources; the impact of pollution as well as crime, piracy and armed robbery; and the potential of oceans to boost economic growth. Better **international ocean governance**, will help ensure that oceans are safe, secure, sustainably used and managed. As a concrete deliverable, the EU will promote a positive decision by the UNGA on the development of an international legally-binding instrument under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction. Building on the recent Joint Communication on International Ocean Governance, the EU supports the outcomes of the UN Conference on Oceans (focusing on SDG 14) and will host the Our Ocean Conference in Malta later in 2017.

The lynchpin of our global engagement

Multilateralism is the most powerful tool that we have in our hands. The best way to promote our values and interests is through cooperation on a global scale. The UN remains the lynchpin of our global engagement. The European way is also the UN way. In the coming year, the EU and the UN will continue to join forces to change the lives of citizens for the better.
