

THE EUROPEAN UNION PRIORITIES AT THE UNITED NATIONS (2012-14)

Summary

INTRODUCTION

The EU and its Member States remain committed to an effective multilateral system with a strong United Nations at its core. Our action at the UN is guided by universal democratic values and principles in order to promote the key values and principles embodied in the UN Charter. In this paper we set out the key areas of action for the EU at the UN in the coming years while being committed to maintaining balance in these different key areas of action in UNGA and HRC. These are exemplified by the EU's mid term priorities and complemented, on an annual basis, by our priorities for the UN General Assembly. The implementation of these priorities will involve action both at the level of the EU itself and, in a number of areas falling within their responsibility, its Member States.

The EU's medium-term priorities are organized around the three key pillars of the United Nations: peace and security, sustainable development and human rights. There cannot be sustainable development without peace and security, and without development and poverty eradication there will be no sustainable peace. Global problems require global solutions and global solutions require global engagement. Human rights, the promotion of democracy and the rule of law are examples of cross-cutting issues that are silver threads throughout our action at the UN. Threats to public health, particularly pandemics, undermine development. We have to address more consistently in all areas of our action the issues of gender equality and empowerment of women worldwide. There are increasing tensions over water and raw materials which require multilateral solutions. The importance of cooperation with the International Criminal Court is central to our action. Our support to the universality of the Rome Statute will go on forming part of our dialogue with others.

We will work closely with the wider UN membership, regional and sub-regional groups and bilaterally with our strategic partners to find such solutions and to strengthen the UN in a constructive, pragmatic and policy-centered way.

I. UN ARCHITECTURE/ REFORM:

- We will actively work to further strengthen the UN and enhance the efficiency, effectiveness, transparency, accountability and representativeness of the system. We are committed to continuing deliberations for the reform of the UN System and of its main bodies and organs. We support the revitalization of the General Assembly and the reform of the Security Council. We will continue supporting the System Wide Coherence process and engage in the debate on the role of the UN in global governance.

- We will continue to encourage sound financial management and budgetary discipline at the UN and will work for a fairer and more balanced distribution of the financial responsibilities among UN Member States according to their capacity to pay.

- We will keep on supporting the strengthening of the humanitarian architecture throughout the UN system and the UN's leading role as coordinator of International Humanitarian Assistance.

II. PEACE AND SECURITY

- We understand security in a broad, holistic manner. Preventing threats from becoming sources of conflict early on is at the heart of our approach. We continue supporting the valuable work of the Peacebuilding Commission and intend to actively promote the concept of Human Security. Mediation is one of the priorities for the future: the EU supports the mediation capacity of the UN and will, in consultation with the UN, elaborate its own mediation-support capacity.

- The EU has developed significantly its activities in the field of crisis management. A close cooperation with the UN is already established, but we aim to advance this further, whilst respecting our distinctive legal frameworks.

- Protection of civilians has become a more prominent feature in the UN peacekeeping context. The EU and the UN can work more closely for the practical application of this protection.

- The role of women in conflict and post-conflict zones, and combating sexual violence as a weapon of intimidation in armed conflict, will remain central in our action in the years to come, and we will promote the full implementation of all relevant UNSC resolutions.

- The responsibility to protect and its operationalisation remains a key priority: our focus will be the prevention of R2P crimes (Pillars 1 and 2), especially through supporting capacity building. We will promote a balanced debate on the responsibility of the international community to take action in a timely and decisive manner in response to mass atrocities.
- We have a role to play in the fight against transnational threats such as trafficking in human beings, cyber crime, criminality and drug trafficking, and we are in favour of an integrated approach on these issues. Fighting together the modern scourge of piracy is also key and deserves close attention.
- We remain resolved in continuing our fight against terrorism and we will work towards the implementation of the Global Counter-Terrorism Strategy and its review, as we will continue to implement the UN sanctions regime.
- Being concerned about energy dependence, and the threats posed by the instability of some providers, we will continue to cooperate with UNECE to promote our energy policy as well as to support action for regional stability and for renewable energy and low-carbon technologies.
- Proliferation of weapons of mass destruction is a key threat to international security and we should all work to implement the work plan of the 2010 Non-Proliferation Treaty review conference. We should achieve progress in establishing a WMD Free Zone in the Middle East and advance towards the entry into force of the Comprehensive Test-Ban Treaty by 2015.
- We will continue supporting the negotiation within the UN of a legally binding Arms Trade Treaty and international action to counter the devastating consequences of landmines, cluster munitions and other explosive remnants of war.

III. SUSTAINABLE DEVELOPEMENT

- We remain strongly committed to the objective of sustainable development in all of its dimensions (i.e. economic, social and environmental). We will support developing countries' efforts to eradicate poverty within the context of sustainable development, as set out in the European Consensus on Development.

- We are committed in achieving the Millennium Development Goals by 2015. We will increase our ODA level to 0.7% of GNI and will encourage others to do likewise. We acknowledge the special effort to be made on the Least Developed Countries (LDC) and will implement the Programme of Action agreed in Istanbul in May 2011. We will promote a more focused allocation of resources in their country and regional cooperation programmes as well as a differentiated approach to their partnerships, to maximize impact of aid.

- Remaining committed to the full implementation of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD)/Cairo Declaration and Programme of Action and the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, the EU will pay special attention to gender equality and the right of women and men to have control over and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexual and reproductive health. To this end, the EU will work actively to ensure that health systems provide information and health services addressing the sexual and reproductive needs of women, as this is crucial for women's rights, gender equality and women's empowerment.

- We will promote strengthened coordination and division of labour among donors as well as broader partnerships with emerging partners, civil society, the private sector and local authorities.

- Our commitment to Climate change, including its international security implications, remains unchanged. We will encourage all States to step up their mitigation efforts to meet the 2° Celsius objective. We need to support the central role of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) as the principal multilateral forum on global action addressing climate change. Pushing forward towards a future legally binding international framework, with a clear roadmap and timeline to a comprehensive, robust and legally binding framework is a key strategic objective.

- The success of and effective follow-up to the forthcoming UN Conference on Sustainable Development (UNCSD or "Rio+20") is of great importance. We aim at achieving substantive progress on the two main themes of the Conference: a Green Economy in the context of Sustainable Development and poverty eradication and the Institutional Framework for Sustainable Development and, as well as working on the follow up of the conference.

- We are deeply concerned by food insecurity and malnutrition, which affects over 1 billion people. We are also committed to a successful outcome of UNCTAD XIII Ministerial Conference and consider that UNCTAD has the potential to support Developing Countries, especially the poorest and the most vulnerable.
- Promotion of nuclear safety and security are equally among our priorities.

IV. HUMAN RIGHTS

- Human rights are at the core of the EU's external action. The High Representative and the Commission have, in their Joint Communication to the European Parliament and the Council presented on 12 December last year, put forward proposals for the elaboration of a strengthened EU external policy on human rights and democracy to be adopted by the Council.
- We will continue to enhance co-operation with third countries in the Human Rights Council (HRC) and in the 3rd Committee. We will keep on actively promoting and supporting the integration and mainstreaming of Human Rights in all aspects of the work of the UN, reaffirming the fact that Human Rights are inextricably linked to the UN's other activities.
- We will strive to preserve the universality of international human rights law and the independence of the UN Human Rights System. Particular attention will be paid to the High Commissioner of Human Rights and her Office and their work in addressing the situation of victims of human rights violations.
- We are committed to further developing the capacity of the Human Rights Council to address serious and urgent human rights situations. We support the active participation by UN Member States at the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) and wish to strengthen the dialogues with third countries by listening to partners on respective priorities and initiatives, notably through the Human Rights dialogues.

- Promoting the rights of those in vulnerable situations is a key concern. Relevant actions are the strengthening of support to the Rights of the Child, the expansion of the cross-regional core group addressing the human rights of LGBT people as well as the preservation of the universality, indivisibility and interdependence of Human Rights as well as the promotion of the non-discrimination and gender equality agenda throughout the UN system.

- We will continue to engage strongly on Freedom of Religion or Belief with third countries with the aim to reaffirm and develop further the acquis of EU-tabled UNGA and HRC resolutions. We will work hard for increased support for the UNGA resolution on the death penalty. We will also pay special attention to the promotion and protection of freedom of expression, notably through the internet.

- The establishment of UN Women should increase the impact of the UN in areas such as gender equality, women's empowerment, the role of women in peace and security, and combating violence against women and girls, as well as sexual and gender-based violence. We have concluded a Memorandum of Understanding with UN women and will also strengthen efforts towards full implementation of the Convention on the Elimination of all Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) and its Optional Protocol review with a view to the withdrawal of remaining reservations by State Parties.