



The EU's relationship with the United Nations

This series of Briefing Papers aims to outline the work of the European Union (EU) in the field of Peacebuilding, how it is involved in Conflict Zones and International Actors (illustrated by Case Studies). The papers are intended to act as an introduction to this topic and to help provide understanding of the EU's work in this field.

This paper outlines the EU's relationship and involvement with the United Nations in the area of peacebuilding.

The EU's Position on the UN

The European Commission states that it is “*working closely with the United Nations across a wide range of policy areas*” including conflict prevention. Co-operation between the two international actors takes the form both of “*financial support for UN programmes and projects and of policy dialogue and participation by the Commission in various UN forums*”¹.

The EU Member States make a significant financial contribution to the UN. According to the European Union @ United Nations website the EU Member States pay approximately 38% of the UN's regular budget².

In the European Security Strategy in the section titled “*An International Order based on Effective Multilateralism*” the United Nations Charter is identified as the “*fundamental framework for international relations*” and that the “*development of a stronger international society, well functioning international institutions and a rule-based international order is our objective*”³.

In short this effective multilateralism can be defined as the organisation of international relations through “*strong, negotiated and enforceable multilateral regimes*”⁴.

The EU also recognises the primary role of the UN in conflict-prevention and the ‘EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts’ states “*EU actions will be undertaken in accordance with the principles and purposes of the UN Charter*”⁵.

The EU at the UN

All EU States are members of the UN, and since 1974 the European Community has had permanent observer status. Cooperation and co-ordination between EU Member States at the UN and other international organisations has increased since the establishment of the EU's Common Foreign and Security Policy in 1992. According to the EU Commission at the UN; “*the Member States, together with the Commission, now regularly coordinate their positions, and the EU thus almost always*

¹ *The EU's relations with the United Nations - a wide-ranging partnership*, http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/un/index.htm

² *The EU at the UN - Overview*, 1 May 2004, http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_1001_en.htm

³ *A Secure Europe in a Better World - European Security Strategy*, 12 December 2003, http://ue.eu.int/cms3_fo/showPage.ASP?id=266&lang=EN&mode=g

⁴ *Effective Multilateralism: Europe, Regional Security, and a Revitalised UN*, December 2004, <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/350.pdf>

⁵ *EU Programme for the Prevention of Violent Conflicts*, 2001, <http://www.eu2001.se/static/eng/pdf/violent.PDF>

speaks with one voice in the UN General Assembly”⁶ except in cases of serious disagreement such as the build up to the current War in Iraq. In 2003 the Commission reported that the EU had a common position in almost 95% of resolutions in the UN General Assembly⁷.

EU & UN Cooperation on Peacebuilding

The European Commission states that it is monitoring the implementation of the Brahimi Report, (the Report of the panel on United Nations Peace Operations⁸), produced in 2001, and subscribes to the peace-building approach it sets out⁹.

According to ‘*The EU and the UN: Strengthening Global Security*’ by Martin Ortega, in ‘*Effective Multilateralism: Europe, Regional Security, and a Revitalised UN*’, “*cooperation on crisis prevention, crisis management and peacekeeping between the European Union and the United Nations has been increasing gradually in theory and practice*”¹⁰.

In September 2003 the ‘Joint Declaration on EU-UN co-operation in Crisis management’ was agreed and signed. In the Declaration the EU and UN agreed to establish a “joint consultative mechanism” to examine how “*to enhance mutual co-ordination and compatibility*” in the areas of planning missions, training military and civilian personnel, communication between the two international actors and the exchange of lessons learned and best practices information¹¹.

Proposals for a Peacebuilding Commission

From 14 to 16 September 2005, a World Summit took place at the UN headquarters in New York¹². The agenda of the meeting was based on the proposals for reform of the UN system as set out by Kofi Annan in his report ‘*In Larger Freedom*’¹³.

In its conclusion on the World Summit the Council of the European Union welcomed the agreement reached and stated, “*the reforms will result in a stronger and more effective UN, better able to meet today’s challenges in areas of development, peace and security, and human rights*”¹⁴

The Annex to the conclusions identifies the EU priorities with regard to reforming the UN. Among these is the establishment of the Peacebuilding Commission (PBC) before 31 December 2005. The PBC as proposed in the ‘Draft Outcome Document’ of the Summit would be an intergovernmental body to assist and mobilize support to countries emerging from conflict¹⁵. In the Annex to the Conclusion the EU states it is “*prepared to support the proposal for joint establishment of the PBC by the General Assembly and Security Council*”.

⁶ *The EU & the European Commission at the UN*,

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/un/intro/index.htm

⁷ The European Union and the United Nations: The choice of multilateralism, Communication from the Commission to the Council and the European Parliament, 10 September 2003,

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/un/docs/com03_526en.pdf

⁸ *Report of the Panel on United Nations Peace Operations*,

http://www.un.org/peace/reports/peace_operations/

⁹ Communication from the Commission on Conflict Prevention, April 2001,

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/cfsp/news/com2001_211_en.pdf

¹⁰ ‘*The EU and the UN: Strengthening Global Security*’ by Martin Ortega in *Effective Multilateralism: Europe, Regional Security, and a Revitalised UN*, p.11, December 2004, <http://fpc.org.uk/fsblob/350.pdf>

¹¹ *Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management Summary*, 24 September 2003,

http://europa-eu-un.org/articles/en/article_2768_en.htm

¹² *UN 2005 World Summit*, http://www.un.org/ga/59/hl60_plenarymeeting.html

¹³ *In Larger Freedom: Towards Development, Security and Human Rights for All*,

<http://www.un.org/largerfreedom/>

¹⁴ *Council Conclusions on UN World Summit*,

http://europa.eu.int/comm/external_relations/un/docs/051107_concl_cns_som_%20mondial_en.pdf

¹⁵ Revised Draft Document of the High-level Plenary Meeting of the General Assembly of September 2005

submitted by the President of the General Assembly, 5 August 2005, http://www.un.org/ga/59/hlpm_rev.2.pdf

Other priorities identified by the EU include the establishment of a Human Rights Council, reform of financial and human resource management within the UN and many others in relation to the areas of sustainable development, climate change & the environment, health issues, trade, terrorism, non-proliferation & disarmament and small arms and light weapons.