



Council of the
European Union

Brussels, 17 June 2019
(OR. en)

10341/19

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NOTE

From: General Secretariat of the Council
To: Delegations

No. prev. doc.: 10258/19

Subject: EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism
- Council conclusions (17 June 2019)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism, as adopted at the 3700th meeting of the Council on 17 June 2019.

Council conclusions – EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism

1. In this interconnected and rapidly changing world, we depend on a rules-based international order and need commonly agreed rules and effective and inclusive global institutions, within and beyond the United Nations (UN) system, to ensure peace, security, human rights, prosperity and sustainable development for all. International law, agreements and rules establish a level playing-field for large and small countries alike. An effective, relevant and resilient multilateral system must be capable of facing new global realities; remain true to the rules and principles of the UN Charter; and promote the peaceful resolution of disputes among states.
2. The need to promote multilateral solutions, a key principle of the EU's international action under the Treaty on European Union, is more urgent than ever. As reflected in the Global Strategy on EU Foreign and Security Policy, multilateralism with the UN at its core is a cornerstone of the EU's external policy. Our interest lies in a multilateral system that is rules and rights-based, protects the global commons, promotes shared public goods, and delivers benefits for citizens in Europe and across the globe. Cooperation through effective multilateralism remains the best way to advance national as well as collective interests.
3. Reaffirming that human rights are universal, indivisible and interdependent and are to be realised worldwide, the EU will continue fostering international action on the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms, human dignity, democracy, the rule of law, social progress, solidarity and equality, including gender equality, the rights of persons belonging to minorities.

4. In the current geopolitical environment, the EU and its Member States will, in close cooperation with partners, step up efforts to promote and strengthen multilateralism. A key priority will be to enhance public support for multilateralism and the rules-based international order by demonstrating its results to citizens.
5. We underline the necessity to further strengthen internal cooperation and cohesion within the EU. We reaffirm our strong commitment to the EU speaking with one voice in relevant international fora.
6. The current times of global uncertainty and challenges to multilateralism and the rules-based international order call for proactive, robust and responsible leadership from the EU on the multilateral scene. The EU and its Member States are important players in setting the multilateral agenda and as the largest collective financial contributor to the UN system.
7. We can only address the major global challenges of our era by working in partnership with others, whether states, international and regional organisations, civil society, the private sector, social partners and other stakeholders and by supporting the reform of the multilateral system.

8. In this context, the Council concludes that the EU aims at an effective multilateral system that delivers results in tackling today's and tomorrow's global challenges. Strengthening the multilateral system will be based on three strands of action:

- Uphold international norms and agreements. The EU and its Member States will lead in implementing and upholding international norms and agreements that provide global public goods and protect future generations. These include: the UN human rights system based on the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and international human rights treaties, as well as the European Convention on Human Rights, the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea; the 2030 Agenda and its 17 Sustainable Development Goals, the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development, the Sendai Framework for Disaster Risk Reduction, the Paris Agreement on climate change; an open, fair and rules-based trade system including an effective World Trade Organisation (WTO); and the principles of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), in particular the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and the Paris Charter; international non-proliferation, disarmament and arms control agreements, including the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, as well as specific diplomatic initiatives like the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action on Iran. The EU will uphold and promote respect for international human rights law and international humanitarian law in today's complex conflicts and crises. The EU will continue to support the International Criminal Court as an important instrument of the international community to combat impunity and promote a rules-based international order. The EU will support the principle of the Responsibility to Protect.

- Extend multilateralism to new global realities. The EU and its Member States will demonstrate leadership in pursuing an innovative agenda in areas in need of strengthened multilateral governance or where new challenges require collective action, taking advantage of the EU's normative capacity, autonomy and influence. The implementation of data protection rules and measures to enhance cybersecurity show the EU's resolve to set standards in the digital age. The EU will make use of fora such as the UN, the Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Internet Governance Forum as well as the Council of Europe and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) to promote standard-setting in these areas. Transformative technologies like artificial intelligence offer unprecedented opportunities which should be seized actively, while ensuring appropriate human rights, ethical and legal standards and safeguards. Other examples where collective action is required include potential new weapons systems, new challenges for the future of work, global health crises, the environment and natural resources, renewable energy, oceans, maritime security, counter-terrorism and outer space.
- Reform: making multilateral organisations fit for purpose. The EU and its Member States will support necessary reforms and modernisation of multilateral institutions such as the bodies and organs of the UN system, including the comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council, as well as the World Bank, the World Trade Organisation and the Council of Europe, and help these institutions adapt to the changing world. We should take criticism of the functioning of these organisations seriously and aim to make them more effective, transparent, democratic, representative and accountable. The EU will continue to promote the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's reforms. Close cooperation between the different UN seats is essential to this end.

9. In line with these objectives, the EU and its Member States will take the following concrete steps:

- Strengthen the EU's existing network of partnerships and diversify it to new partnerships, including through issue-based engagement with existing and new partners, to advance EU interests in maximising cooperative solutions to common challenges. This will entail innovative outreach, greater accountability on joint commitments with partners, as well as stronger synergies between the EU's bilateral and multilateral diplomatic action with its partners, including by making better use of the EU's leverage in terms of access to the internal market and financial aid.
- Continue to exercise global leadership and work with partners on key issues such as the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement on climate change. The Council supports the work towards a Global Pact for the Environment.
- Continue to promote and protect human rights, support democracy and the rule of law, gender equality, which also contribute globally to ensuring peace and security, in all relevant fora including the UN Human Rights Council, the General Assembly, the Security Council as well as the UN Human Rights Treaty Bodies. The EU will continue to work with stakeholders to strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of the Human Rights Council, including its role in preventing human rights violations, and will support the mandate and independence of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The EU will continue to call upon all states to grant UN and other mandated human rights mechanisms unhindered access to their territories.

- Reinforce the EU's role in bolstering international security through conflict prevention, mediation, peacekeeping and crisis management, drawing on civilian and military assets. To achieve this goal, the EU will seek to enhance the effectiveness of multilateral engagement for peace and security through strengthened partnerships with the UN - including the UN Peacebuilding Commission, the World Bank, NATO, the OSCE and other regional and sub-regional actors. Strengthening EU Common Security and Defence Policy, including through PESCO and the European Defence Fund and the full implementation of the Civilian Compact, will improve the EU toolbox in this regard and enhance its capacity to act as a security provider and to act autonomously, in line with relevant Council conclusions.
- Bearing in mind the increasing threats to international peace and security, work to promote and strengthen the international arms control, non-proliferation and disarmament architecture, and to ensure effective implementation of commitments undertaken. Ensuring accountability and ending impunity is crucial to preserve the integrity of established norms. Initiatives to address a rapidly evolving landscape, covering conventional weapons, weapons of mass destruction, and emerging technologies, must be explored and developed in the appropriate multilateral fora.
- Reaffirm the application of international law in cyberspace, by coordinating an EU position in the upcoming discussions on cyber issues in the context of international security. In that regard, promote the EU's efforts to ensure stability and conflict prevention in cyberspace, including implementation of norms of responsible State behaviour, the development and implementation of regional confidence building measures, and the use of the framework for a joint EU diplomatic response to malicious cyber activities.

- Continue the EU's leadership in the effort to preserve and reinforce the rules-based multilateral trading system, with the WTO at its core, in all its functions, to ensure that it can effectively address current global trade challenges.
- Promote cross-regional co-operation as an essential element of the multilateral order and engage with co-operative regional actors on the basis of mutual interests, in particular with the African Union, the Organisation of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, the League of Arab States and sub-regional organisations, as well as groups active in multilateral fora (e.g. the Organisation of Islamic Cooperation, the G77 and the Non-Aligned Movement). Initiate further concrete steps to deepen trilateral co-operation, for example the African Union-EU-UN co-operation, on topics of common concern. Intensify co-operation with other European partners, especially candidate countries, the Council of Europe and the OSCE, as well as with international organisations and fora such as the G7, G20, NATO, World Bank, regional development banks, the International Monetary Fund and the OECD.
- The EU will continue to work with partners around the world to jointly address migration and forced displacement in line with relevant European Council and Council conclusions.
- Strengthen the EU's engagement for improved implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda by systematically integrating and mainstreaming a gender perspective in the EU's policies, based on gender analysis and improved collection of sex-disaggregated data. The EU's engagement should recognise gender equality and women's participation and empowerment as a necessary prerequisite for effectively addressing the peace and conflict continuum.

- Reinforce partnerships with young people and their organisations, not least in implementing the 2030 Agenda, including in combatting climate change, as well in contributing to peace and security and promoting decent work.
- Deepen our multi-stakeholder approach to multilateralism, by more effectively engaging civil society, human rights defenders, NGOs, the media, the private sector and social partners, culture and business communities including the tech sector, academia and local governments which make an important contribution to developing global responses.
- Work towards leveraging funding by the EU and its Member States to the multilateral system at global, regional and country level in support of agreed policy priorities, including development cooperation priorities, while respecting criteria for Official Development Assistance and principles for development aid effectiveness.
- Work towards a more strategic approach to quality voluntary funding by the EU and its Member States for key UN funds, programmes and specialised agencies. Prioritise predictable, multi-annual support for multi-agency actions by the UN, including through core funding and interagency pooled funds, where appropriate. Support the UN Secretary-General's call to ensure that each UN Member State fulfils its financial obligations to the organisation on time and in full, so that the UN's finances can be restored to a sound and sustainable basis. As a major humanitarian donor, the EU and its Member States will continue advocating respect for the humanitarian principles, work towards making the humanitarian response more effective and efficient, and support efforts to broaden the donor constituency in the international system, in view of appropriate humanitarian funding.

- Continue and further enhance the close European cooperation in the UN Security Council and on Security Council-related matters, building on existing mechanisms and best practices. The EU will continue to promote and facilitate concertation efforts among EU Member States that are also members of the United Nations Security Council as well as the exchange of information between them, the other Member States and the EU High Representative. Strengthen the coordination of EU Member States in the UN General Assembly and across the UN system, building on work underway and on best practices in these areas. Support candidates for senior positions in multilateral organisations who are experienced, well-qualified and committed to effective management, including candidates from EU Member States where appropriate.
 - Step up public diplomacy to promote multilateralism, making use of opportunities such as the 75th anniversary of the UN, the 40th anniversary of the UN in Vienna, the 50th anniversary of the entry into force of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, the 25th anniversary of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the 20th anniversary of the Women, Peace and Security agenda in 2020. The EU and its Member States will improve coordination and messaging at key events such as the UN General Assembly high-level week and pursue a fresh positive narrative on universal human rights, as illustrated by the "Good Human Rights Stories" initiative.
 - Reach out to partners and fora which have started or reinforced initiatives on connectivity in order to promote the EU's approach to sustainable, inclusive, transparent and high quality infrastructure.
10. Bringing together their experience, funding and resources, the EU and its Member States will work closely together and burden-share, demonstrating unity and solidarity to project the EU's global presence and translate this agenda for multilateralism into action.

11. The implementation of these Council conclusions is a joint undertaking and a shared responsibility of the EU institutions and Member States. Building on the EU's engagement for multilateralism, EU institutions and Member States will jointly put into concrete action the proposals made in paragraph nine. The Council will regularly monitor the implementation of these conclusions on the basis of input by the High Representative, the Commission and Member States and will take stock of overall progress in 2020, with a view to developing further concrete proposals, as necessary.
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