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Subject: EU priorities at the United Nations during the 76th United Nations General Assembly, September 2021 - September 2022  
- Council conclusions (12 July 2021)

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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on EU priorities at the United Nations during the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 2021 – September 2022, as approved by the Council at its 3807th meeting held on 12 July 2021.

**Council conclusions on EU priorities at the United Nations  
during the 76th session of the United Nations General Assembly,  
September 2021 – September 2022<sup>1</sup>**

1. In today's multipolar world marked by major geopolitical and economic power shifts, multilateralism remains the most effective means to govern global relations in a way that benefits all. Increasingly complex global challenges call for holistic solutions that can only come about through more effective multilateral governance and rules-based international cooperation. Multilateralism must be effective, fair and deliver results that serve both EU and global interests and values. The Council welcomes the timely Joint Communication from the Commission and the High Representative on strengthening the EU's contribution to rules-based multilateralism. The EU and its Member States will continue to harness their convening power in support of effective multilateralism by bringing global actors together towards common global solutions and will advance strategic priorities and interests multilaterally, in line with the 2019 Council conclusions on EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism, in order to ensure a safer and more stable world and a sustainable, inclusive global recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>1</sup> Throughout this document the use of 'EU' does not prejudice whether the competence lies with 'EU', the 'EU and its Member States' or exclusively with 'Member States'.

## A United Nations fit for the 21<sup>st</sup> century

2. The EU and its Member States are and will remain firm supporters of the rules-based international order with the UN at its core, rooted in respect for international law, including international human rights law and international humanitarian law. The world no longer resembles what it was when the UN was founded 75 years ago. To remain legitimate, the UN must be equipped to tackle increasingly complex global challenges and respond to the growing demands of citizens in terms of transparency, accountability, inclusiveness and effective delivery. The process initiated with the adoption of the political declaration at the occasion of the high-level meeting to commemorate the UN's 75th anniversary in September 2020 provides a unique opportunity to transform and upgrade the UN system geared towards these objectives. The EU looks forward to the UN Secretary-General's report on how to advance "Our Common Agenda" and stands ready to engage actively in addressing current and future challenges and improve global governance.
3. We will continue to support the effective implementation of the UN reforms, working together towards a UN that is fit for purpose, while seizing the opportunities and adapting the organisation to the global challenges and geopolitics of the 21st century. We will support necessary reforms of the bodies and organs of the UN system, including the comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council, to make them more effective, transparent, democratic, representative and accountable. The EU will also strive for sustainable and adequate financing of the UN and its mandates, in line with the Funding Compact, in order to enable its effective functioning.
4. The EU recognises the progress made towards a reinforced UN 'delivering as one' operating in a more integrated, coherent, efficient and results-driven manner and will continue to promote this, supporting UN agencies, funds and programmes in accelerating the implementation of the 2030 Agenda, including the Addis Ababa Action Agenda on Financing for Development. As a shared priority, the humanitarian-development-peace nexus is key to strengthen coordination across the EU and UN humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actions and ensure a comprehensive approach aimed at addressing risks, building resilience, reducing inequalities and delivering sustainable results on the ground for local communities.

5. The EU will make full use of the new Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – “Global Europe” *to support its multilateral agenda, and help drive multilateral reforms and effective cooperation.* In the programming process, the EU will adopt a policy-driven focus on what it can do together with its Member States and partner countries in a “Team Europe” approach at country, regional and multilateral level, wherever appropriate. To increase the effectiveness of its external action, the EU will work towards aligning its funding to the multilateral system more closely with its agreed policy priorities, including through a more strategic approach to quality voluntary funding for key UN funds, programmes and specialised agencies. Visibility and awareness raising of EU and EU Member States’ funding should be enhanced.

### **Building back better**

6. The COVID-19 pandemic has hit the world with devastating impacts on individuals, societies and economies and has shown how intertwined global challenges are. To win the battle against the pandemic, safe and effective vaccines and immunisation, supplies as well as diagnostics and treatment, should be accessible to all across the globe. The vaccination process is not a race between countries but a race against time. The EU and its Member States are one of the lead contributors to ACT-A and its COVAX Facility and will continue to play a central role in promoting the multilateral response to ensure **safe and fair access to vaccines**, tests and treatments against COVID-19 for all, notably by diversifying global vaccine manufacturing capacity and scaling up vaccine sharing and access, also through the EU Vaccine Sharing Mechanism, leaving no one behind.

7. **Strengthening health systems** and the **international preparedness** for – and response to – future pandemics will remain a top priority for the EU, in accordance with an all-of-government, all-of-society, “one health” approach to pandemic preparedness and response, and in line with the Rome Declaration adopted at the Global Health Summit. In a spirit of global solidarity, the EU and its Member States are committed to advancing global health security, and will continue leading efforts to strengthen the World Health Organisation (WHO) preparedness for and capacity to respond to health emergencies and working towards an international treaty on pandemics within its framework. The fight against antimicrobial resistance needs to be accelerated at global level and we will advocate stronger global agreements on the use of and access to antimicrobials.
8. As the world emerges from this crisis, there is significant ground to recover: 2020 saw the first reversal in human development for the last thirty years. The EU emphasises the urgent need to **build back better and greener** and to promote multilateral solutions that focus on building a more sustainable, inclusive, just, equal and resilient world, with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement on Climate Change as our roadmap. The EU will pursue a Global Recovery Initiative linking investment and debt relief to the Sustainable Development Goals to secure a truly transformative, post-COVID-19 path. As the world's leading provider of Official Development Assistance, the EU and its Member States share a strong commitment to support partner countries in implementing the 2030 Agenda. In that respect, we will continue to foster Integrated National Financing Frameworks (INFFs) in order to coordinate and align finance to national priorities and the SDGs, improving the impact of all available resources and promoting policy coherence for sustainable development. We should use the Decade of Action to accelerate the implementation of the SDGs by 2030 leaving no one behind, while stressing the importance of addressing SDG targets with a 2020 timeline that has not been met, in order to ensure the continued ambition of the 2030 Agenda and to safeguard its integrity. There is a particular need to concentrate efforts to reach the furthest behind first, who have been most impacted by the pandemic. The EU welcomes the UN Secretary-General’s initiative to convene a Food Systems Summit to launch bold actions for the transformation of the food systems to make them safer, more resilient and environmentally sustainable.

9. Economic recovery must also go hand in hand with social justice, social protection, inclusion, and decent work. The EU will contribute to the global implementation of the ILO Centenary Declaration for the Future of Work. The EU will continue to promote the effective realisation of the fundamental rights at work and will advocate for universal social protection to address inequalities and the needs of persons in vulnerable situations. Quality education must be at the heart of the recovery, as a key means to give the young generation good prospects in life.
10. Comprehensive dialogues and partnerships on migration are an integral part of the EU's relations with partners, centred on respective interests and common priorities. The EU will continue to engage with the UN and partner countries to step up global efforts in this regard. The EU takes note of the International Migration Review Forum, and will continue to promote respect for international refugee law and voluntary resettlement.

### **Making the world safer**

11. In a world of geopolitical tensions and multifaceted threats to international and regional stability, the EU will enhance its efforts to **promote peace and security** and work together with other partners to uphold fundamental values and strengthen the capacity of the UN to fulfil its mandate in that regard. It is also important to increase coordination with other regional and international organisations as well as International Financial Institutions. The African Union is a key partner, and efforts will continue to support African-led peace and security initiatives as well as to deepen trilateral AU-EU-UN cooperation.

12. Promoting a global system for **human rights** and democracy is at the heart of the EU's commitment to strengthening multilateralism and the EU's leadership in supporting the rules-based international order. The EU will continue to act as a global leader in promoting and protecting human rights, gender equality, and the rule of law and will stand up against any attempt to backtrack on the principle that all human rights are universal, indivisible, interdependent and interrelated. In the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, and recognising the disproportionate impact on women and girls, we reaffirm that human rights, including women's and girls' full enjoyment of human rights, must be at the heart of our response to the pandemic. The EU will continue to strongly oppose all forms of discrimination including on grounds of sex, race, ethnic or social origin, religion or belief, political or any other opinion, disability, age, sexual orientation, and gender identity. The EU reiterates its commitment to equality and non-discrimination and to the entitlement of all persons to enjoy the full range of human rights and fundamental freedoms. We will support the implementation of the UN Secretary-General's Call to Action for Human Rights and make all efforts to put human rights at the centre of the UN agenda<sup>2</sup> by building coalitions to promote a common agenda based on democracy, human rights, equality and the rule of law. The EU will continue to advocate sustainable and adequate financing of the UN human rights pillar.
13. The EU will use all available tools to fulfil its commitments to human rights, including in the framework of the UN Human Rights Council, the UN General Assembly, the UN Security Council and any other relevant fora, consistent with the EU Treaty and the UN Charter. We will continue to denounce human rights violations and abuses wherever they occur and will advocate unrestricted access to international human rights mechanisms, strengthen accountability and international justice mechanisms, and the fight against impunity. The EU remains a steadfast supporter of the International Criminal Court and is committed to protect the integrity of the Rome Statute and the judicial independence of the Court. The European Union and its Member States will continue to advocate for a new Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of Crimes against Humanity.

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<sup>2</sup> Council Conclusions on EU Priorities in UN Human Rights Fora in 2021 of 22 February 2021 (ST 6326/21).

14. At a time when civic space is severely constrained in many parts of the world, we will promote a safe and open space for civil society organisations and human rights defenders as well as journalists and media workers, including their participation in UN processes, and continue to strongly condemn threats, attacks or reprisals against them.
15. The EU will promote youth empowerment and participation and vigorously scale-up international efforts towards gender equality, the full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls and their empowerment, in line with its international commitments including through advancing the implementation of the Women, Peace and Security agenda. The EU will continue to promote the integration of a gender perspective and advocate for gender-responsive policies throughout UN fora, as well as in the Beijing+25 celebrations, including the Generation Equality Forum. The EU will continue to prevent and combat all forms of sexual and gender-based violence, including domestic violence and conflict related sexual violence, and hold perpetrators accountable, including through the EU-led Group of Friends for the elimination of violence against women and girls.
16. The EU remains committed to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.



17. A true partner of the United Nations, the EU will continue to follow an integrated approach to conflicts and crises, from conflict prevention and peacebuilding to crisis response and stabilisation, and to support the UN Secretary-General's call for a global ceasefire. In implementing its new mediation concept in support of multilateral responses to crisis situations, the EU will continue to work closely with the UN in support of UN mediation efforts. In follow-up to the 2020 Peacebuilding Architecture Review, the EU will focus on bringing the peacebuilding work closer to the ground, promoting an inclusive multi-stakeholder approach and working towards more predictable and sustainable financing for peacebuilding, in cooperation with partners. The EU will build on its support to the UN Peacebuilding Fund and will promote initiatives aimed at delivering concrete contributions to sustainable peacebuilding financing. The EU will engage in the discussions at the planned high-level event on peacebuilding financing in 2022. The EU will also work to enhance the advisory role of the UN Peacebuilding Commission to the United Nations Security Council as well as its own engagement with this body. The EU will continue to promote the inclusion of youth in peacebuilding and sustaining peace as part of our continuous support for the Youth, Peace and Security agenda.
18. The EU will continue to support UN actions in response to conflicts that cause harm to civilians and threaten global security and stability, as well as the launch of the next phase of the UN Secretary-General's Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative. To address the consequences of the changing global context, the EU will reinforce its partnership with the United Nations on **peacekeeping** and **crisis management**, including through defining the next set of EU-UN priorities on peace operations and crisis management for 2022-2024 as well as through the effective implementation of the EU-UN Framework for the Provision of Mutual Support in the context of their respective missions and operations. Particular attention will be given to ensuring synergies and enhancing complementarity between the UN missions and EU missions and operations and other relevant UN and EU instruments to improve impact on the ground, emphasising that coordination is particularly important in transition contexts. Strengthening cooperation on preventing and tackling security risks linked to **climate change** and environmental degradation as well as the protection of children in armed conflict will remain a key focus for the EU.

19. The EU will continue to promote the preservation of a safe, secure and sustainable space environment and the peaceful use of outer space. In this context, we will pursue our work on the implementation and further development of the guidelines for the long-term sustainability of outer space activities.
20. The EU will continue to work closely with the UN and other partners on tackling global terrorism, violent extremism, transnational organised crime and cybercrime, trafficking in human beings, corruption, money laundering and terrorism financing. The EU remains committed to pursue an integrated and multidisciplinary approach to address the world drug situation.
21. The EU as a leading global humanitarian donor will further develop its partnership with the UN towards a more effective and efficient global humanitarian system and intensify advocacy for the respect of the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, impartiality and independence<sup>3</sup>. The EU will also remain a vocal defender of International Humanitarian Law and will promote safe, rapid and unimpeded access to affected populations, the principled delivery of humanitarian aid as well as the safety, security and protection of civilians, in particular women and children, persons with disabilities, and of humanitarian and medical workers. The EU reaffirms the importance of robust and effective sanctions regimes in the fight against terrorism. Safeguarding the humanitarian space through appropriate measures, including through the consistent inclusion of humanitarian exceptions, where relevant, is essential in order not to impede the delivery of humanitarian assistance.

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<sup>3</sup> Council Conclusions on the Communication from the Commission to the European Parliament and the Council on the EU's humanitarian action: new challenges, same principles of 20 May 2021 (ST 8966/21).

22. The international **disarmament, non-proliferation and arms control** architecture is increasingly challenged by geopolitical tensions and the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU will continue working towards a successful outcome of the Tenth Review Conference of the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons (NPT), in order to uphold and to strengthen the NPT as a key multilateral instrument for international peace, security, and stability, and to promote its universalisation and full implementation. Our support for the work of the Organisation for the Prohibition of Chemical Weapons (OPCW) will continue. Breaching the global norm against chemical weapons is unacceptable and those responsible for their use must be held to account. The EU also supports the UN Secretary-General's Mechanism for Investigation of alleged Use of Chemical and Biological Weapons, as a key component of the non-proliferation and disarmament architecture. Responsible behaviours and prevention of an arms race in outer space will remain a specific focus. The EU and its Member States will continue to promote a voluntary instrument to reach this goal, without excluding the possibility of a new legally binding instrument in the future.
23. The EU will contribute to the success of the forthcoming Review Conferences of the Biological and Toxin Weapons Convention (BTWC), and of the Convention on Certain Conventional Weapons (CCW). The EU will remain actively engaged in the Group of Governmental Experts to discuss the questions related to new and emerging technologies in the area of lethal autonomous weapons systems. This year marks the 25th Anniversary of the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty (CTBT). The EU will continue to promote the entry into force and the universalisation of the CTBT, the universal adherence to and the effective implementation of the Arms Trade Treaty (ATT) and the Anti-Personnel Mine Ban Convention (APMBC). The EU will continue to support the humanitarian goal of the Cluster Munitions Convention (CCM). The EU continues to encourage all States to subscribe to the Hague Code of Conduct against Ballistic Missile Proliferation (HCoC) as well as the effective implementation of the Programme of Action to Prevent, Combat and Eradicate the Illicit Trade in Small Arms and Light Weapons in All its Aspects. The EU will continue to advocate responsible military use of new technologies and support the UN Secretary-General's Agenda for Disarmament, including commencing immediate negotiations on a Fissile Material Cut-Off Treaty (FMCT) in the Conference on Disarmament and the follow up to the Seventh Biennial Meeting of States on the Small Arms and Lights Weapons agenda.

24. The EU will continue to promote the full application of existing international law in cyberspace and will work with international partners to prevent conflict and advance cooperation and stability through the normative framework for responsible State behaviour, the implementation of confidence building measures and support for cyber capacity building. In this regard, the EU will continue to promote the early establishment of a UN Programme of Action for Responsible State Behaviour in Cyberspace. The EU underlines its continued support for the Budapest Convention on Cybercrime as a comprehensive multilateral legal framework for developing national legislation and international cooperation to tackle cybercrime and emphasises the complementarity between UN efforts and the already existing international instruments in this field and the importance of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. In this regard, the EU underlines that the agreement on modalities for the negotiations of a new international convention on countering the use of information and communications technologies for criminal purposes must allow for a transparent process and meaningful engagement of all relevant parties and ensure legal consistency. Recognising the interconnected and complex nature of cyberspace, the EU will continue to promote the multi-stakeholder approach to address the challenges.

#### **Winning the race against climate change and restoring our relationship with nature**

25. **Climate change** and **biodiversity loss** are existential threats to humanity. Global climate action still falls short of what is required to achieve the long-term goals of the Paris Agreement and the 2030 Agenda. The COVID-19 crisis has highlighted the need to act urgently and decisively now to fight climate change and to restore our relationship with nature, addressing also the damage that pollution inflicts on societies and enhancing the fight against global deforestation and water scarcity. The EU is setting an example by stepping up its domestic commitments with the objective of becoming climate neutral by 2050 and enhancing the ambition of its 2030 Nationally Determined Contribution (NDC) under the Paris Agreement to at least 55% compared to 1990, in line with the objective of keeping global temperature increase below 1.5°C. The European Green Deal is the EU's growth strategy, setting out a model for sustainable and inclusive growth, with transition to a circular economy, and green global recovery that leaves no one behind. Our societies urgently require a clear sense of direction, so that the net zero transition can be significantly accelerated and so that financial flows are aligned with this ambition.

26. The EU will continue to engage intensely with all partners, in particular all major economies, to encourage them to raise their climate ambitions, meet the objectives of the Paris Agreement and other environmental agreements such as the Convention on Biological Diversity and UN Convention to Combat Desertification, to achieve climate neutrality by mid-century, fight against desertification, land degradation and drought and reverse biodiversity loss by 2030<sup>4</sup>. The 2021 UN Conferences of the Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity (COP15), the Convention to Combat Desertification (COP15) and 26th UN Climate Change Conference of the Parties (COP26) will be key moments in this respect. The EU calls on all parties to enhance the ambition and increase the clarity, transparency and understanding of their NDCs, as well as to communicate Long-Term Low Emissions Development Strategies well ahead of the 26th Conference of the Parties (COP26) in Glasgow in November 2021. The EU and its Members States confirm their continuing commitment to further scale up the mobilisation of international climate finance and urge all developed countries, and other parties in a position to do so, to scale up their own contributions, underlining the importance of increased financing for adaptation.
27. The EU will also continue to support the objectives of the UN Decade on Ecosystem Restoration. The EU will pursue accelerated action towards a swift global energy transition and universal access to safe, secure, sustainable and affordable energy at the UN High-level dialogue on Energy and beyond, and will continue to address energy poverty with a view to delivering the Paris Agreement objectives and the 2030 Agenda. Furthermore, the EU will support initiatives aimed at delivering concrete contributions to these processes, such as the planned UN meeting Stockholm+50 to take place on the occasion of the 50th anniversary of the first UN conference on the human environment in 2022. The EU will constructively engage in discussions on transforming humankind's relationship to nature, scaling up and accelerating means of implementation, including mobilising finance as well as sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic.

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<sup>4</sup> Council conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy-Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal of 25 January 2021 (ST 5263/21).

28. Building on the momentum created by the UN Biodiversity Summit and the [Leaders' Pledge for Nature](#), the EU will lead by example in tackling the global biodiversity crisis and in developing an ambitious new UN Global Biodiversity Framework at the UN Conference of Parties to the Convention on Biological Diversity. We will continue strengthening international cooperation on environmentally sustainable finance, notably under the International Platform on Sustainable Finance, and remain committed to further scale up the mobilisation of international environmental finance. The EU will support universal access to safe drinking water and adequate sanitation.
29. The EU will continue to uphold the central role of the UN Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) which sets out the legal framework within which all activities in the oceans and seas must be carried out, and remains committed to strengthening international ocean governance and ensuring safe, secure, healthy and productive oceans and seas at the forthcoming 2022 UN Ocean Conference and other relevant fora, particularly by stepping up efforts to ensure the conclusion of an ambitious international legally binding instrument under the UNCLOS on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological diversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ) as well as to reach a global agreement on marine plastics pollution.

### **Shaping the global digital agenda**

30. The EU will support the UN's efforts to harness new technologies for positive change and develop adequate governance based on a multi-stakeholder approach. The EU recognises the contribution of digitalisation to sustainable development while acknowledging that digitalisation can amplify pre-existing inequalities if not addressed properly. Building on the EU's vision of a Digital Decade and its priority of being fit for the digital age, we will lead international efforts to build an open, free and secure digital world, in line with the SDGs and in accordance with international human rights law. The EU will also support initiatives undertaken in the framework of the UN Technology Facilitation Mechanism in order to strengthen coherence among science and technology initiatives and accelerate the achievement of the SDGs.

31. The EU will address the broader challenges and opportunities of digital transformation with initiatives to expand global digital connectivity, improve digital skills, contribute to global digital capacity, and enable digital entrepreneurship, in particular with respect to developing countries. The EU will aim to bridge the digital divide and tackle digital disparities, notably for those who cannot fully benefit from enriched, accessible and secure digital space and services. The EU will also strive to shape and lead international negotiations by setting ambitious global standards and principles, as well as adequate governance and cooperation mechanisms for the new digital era. The EU will continue to build strategic partnerships to shape the global digital agenda and follow closely the implementation of the UN Secretary General's Roadmap for Digital Cooperation, including by seeking to form a global coalition of likeminded partners around shared values and a common vision of democratic, human rights-based and human-centric digitalisation.
32. The EU will continue to promote an ethical and human-centric approach ensuring the promotion and protection of human rights and the rule of law in the development and use of Artificial Intelligence, as well as to build convergence towards modern personal data protection frameworks. The EU will also work with all relevant stakeholders to ensure an open, free, secure and stable internet; to protect privacy and data flows; to combat hate speech, terrorist and illegal content online; to combat mis- and dis-information; to uphold the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance, which is open, inclusive and decentralised; and to support the development of digital finance and e-government.

## **A stronger EU-UN partnership**

33. In a rapidly evolving world, a strong and dynamic partnership between the European Union and the United Nations is more important than ever. The EU will continue to support the UN as the indispensable forum for international cooperation and the cornerstone of the multilateral system. It will seek to reinforce its cooperation with the UN by establishing a regular EU-UN Summit. We will build stronger, more diverse and inclusive partnerships with all relevant stakeholders – including UN Member States, regional organisations, civil society, youth, international financial institutions, the private sector and academia - to support its modernisation and shape global responses to the challenges of the 21st century. The EU will remain a major driving force behind a truly inclusive, networked multilateralism and will provide global leadership, in view of a safer, more stable and prosperous world for all.

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