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From: General Secretariat of the Council

To: Delegations

Subject: Council Conclusions on EU priorities at the United Nations during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 2023 – September 2024

Delegations will find in the annex the Council Conclusions on EU priorities at the United Nations during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly, September 2023 – September 2024, as approved by the Council at its 3965th meeting held on 20 July 2023.

**DRAFT Council Conclusions on EU priorities at the United Nations
during the 78th session of the United Nations General Assembly,
September 2023 – September 2024¹**

1. Multilateralism is a fundamental principle of the EU. It is the most effective means to govern global relations in a way that benefits all people. The challenges facing the world cannot be addressed by any one country alone; they must be resolved collectively. That is why the EU and its Member States will continue to uphold the rules-based international order founded on the UN Charter and to strive for a well-functioning, reformed multilateral system, with an effective and sustainably funded United Nations at its core.
2. Today we face a proliferation of crises: Russia’s illegal war of aggression against Ukraine – a manifest violation of the UN Charter which poses an acute challenge to global peace and security – and its global consequences, the situation in the Sahel and other parts of Africa, the climate emergency, rising food insecurity, systematic attacks and erosion of democracy and human rights, terrorism and violent extremism, cyber threats, as well as backsliding on achieving the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), which contributes to ever deeper global inequalities. The EU will continue to work for a world where the interests of all nations and people are properly represented, and will enhance efforts to address mistrust in global institutions by showing that multilateralism delivers for everyone.

¹ 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’.

3. The COVID-19 pandemic put a sudden halt to global progress in development, setting back the realisation of the 2030 Agenda and the SDGs. The continued fallout of the pandemic and the political and economic disruption and rising inflation consequent to the ongoing Russian aggression against Ukraine are hampering efforts to put the implementation of the SDGs back on track. The impacts are being felt disproportionately by vulnerable countries and populations. Recognising that the full achievement of the SDGs is at risk, the EU will redouble its efforts towards the full and timely implementation of the 2030 Agenda. We must all assume our collective responsibility in this respect, and remain active in building global partnerships to achieve our common goals.

4. The SDGs are intrinsically linked to peace and security and human rights. Without peace, all other goals – from human rights and gender equality to addressing climate change, water, energy and food security – will not be achieved. The EU will remain a staunch defender and promoter of human rights, be they civil, cultural, economic, political or social rights, as well as fundamental freedoms. In the spirit of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, adopted 75 years ago, the EU reaffirms its unequivocal commitment to respect, protect and fulfil human rights and to defend their universality and indivisibility, and will continue to work with partners to address emerging risks for human rights. The EU will vigorously promote and scale up international efforts towards gender equality, the advancement and full enjoyment of all human rights by all women and girls and their empowerment, in line with its international commitments. The EU will continue to place the prevention and elimination of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence at the centre of its efforts.

5. Against this background, the EU’s action at the United Nations in the coming year will continue to be guided by the following overarching priorities:
 - I. Accelerating implementation of the SDGs;
 - II. Strengthening global governance in line with “Our Common Agenda”;
 - III. Building partnerships.

I. Accelerating implementation of the SDGs

6. The SDGs are a promise to current and future generations, which we need to keep. The SDG Summit in September 2023 provides a unique opportunity to acknowledge the accomplishments, and more importantly to reverse the backsliding in the implementation of the SDGs towards achieving the targets of the 2030 Agenda. To accelerate progress towards achieving the SDGs, we need to mobilise strong political commitment, enhance the mobilisation of financial resources from all sources, cooperate more closely, and act more swiftly. The SDG Summit is a vital opportunity to get back on course, and we must seize it. The Summit should identify ways to accelerate implementation of the SDGs, in close synergy with ‘Our Common Agenda’ leading up to the ‘Summit of the Future’ in September 2024 and beyond.
7. Amidst worrying levels of food insecurity worldwide, the EU has taken decisive action, with the adoption of a comprehensive Team Europe response which includes humanitarian and longer-term responses, and will continue to advocate for multilateral cooperation to address the global food crisis. The SDG Summit should take into account the outcomes of the UN Food Systems Summit Stocktaking Moment which is key for building resilient, sustainable, and nutritious global food systems.
8. The EU’s Global Gateway is a key contribution to accelerating delivery of the SDGs worldwide. Through the Global Gateway strategy, the EU and its Member States aim to boost smart, clean and secure links in digital, energy, and transport sectors and to strengthen health, education and research systems across the world. The EU promotes resilient and financially sustainable connectivity investments, and inclusive and trusted partnerships, which allow our partners to develop their societies and economies with lasting benefits for local communities. The EU will remain closely engaged in supporting sustainable urban development globally, pursuing the delivery of the New Urban Agenda.

9. The first EU-level Voluntary Review of SDG implementation, alongside the national reviews of EU Member States, demonstrates our firm commitment to giving a renewed boost to the 2030 Agenda as our common roadmap at the global level.

10. The necessary transitions require actively mobilising resources, as recognised in the UN Secretary-General's proposed SDG Stimulus plan. Financing for Development should be our priority to achieve this goal and we welcome the UN Secretary-General's efforts to scale-up long-term financing for development and improve transparency on the use of resources. The EU supports a reform of the international financial architecture that would benefit the most vulnerable while safeguarding global public goods.

11. The mission and model of Multilateral Development Banks (MDB) must evolve, to address today's global challenges, whilst supporting the poorest and most vulnerable populations, especially in Least Developed Countries (LDCs), Landlocked Developing Countries (LLDCs) and Small Island Developing States (SIDS) to ensure that no one is left behind. The EU is committed to ongoing discussions on MDB reform, including through enhancing the efficiency of their capital use and extending the fiscal space for developing countries. The EU will strive to ensure that the MDBs contribute to achieving the SDGs. This includes MDBs' traditional mission of eradicating extreme poverty and boosting shared prosperity as well as effectively addressing digital transformation and global challenges such as climate change, environmental degradation and biodiversity loss, inequalities, pandemics and fragility, to preserve global public goods. With regard to the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the EU remains committed to voluntarily mobilise and deliver Special Drawing Rights (SDR) to the Poverty Reduction and Growth Trust and the Resilience and Sustainability Trust and invites others to follow and deliver on the pledges to these two Trusts in a timely manner. The EU commends the attainment of the 100 billion SDR target at the Summit for a New Global Financing Pact.

12. It is a shared responsibility to ensure that the UN Development System works efficiently as a key enabler of the 2030 Agenda. Collectively, this requires finding a predictable and sustainable long-term financing solution for the UN Resident Coordinator System. A repositioned, more integrated and sustainably financed UN Development System, making full use of the reinvigorated Resident Coordinator system, can make a real difference on the ground and turn the tide on SDG implementation. We look forward to strengthening the EU-UN partnership at country level, where the Team Europe approach and the EU Global Gateway provide an opportunity to increase strategic synergies with the UN system and partner countries as well as among humanitarian, development and peacebuilding actors in support of a reinforced UN ‘delivering as one’.
13. Decisive climate action is a pressing global need and a test for the ability of the multilateral system to respond. The EU is committed to remain at the forefront of global climate action, working together with partners in the multilateral system to promote a UN system-wide approach to climate and towards creating synergies with other relevant international processes. The EU calls for the full implementation of the Paris Agreement, highlighting the synergies with the 2030 Agenda and the Addis Ababa Action Agenda. The EU will remain a staunch supporter of addressing the interlinkages between the triple planetary crises of climate change, biodiversity loss, and pollution while strengthening ocean-based climate action as well as the role of climate fragility across the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. The EU is committed to promoting a human rights-based and gender-responsive approach to climate action, promoting social justice, fairness and inclusiveness in the global transition towards climate neutrality. The window of opportunity is rapidly closing for limiting the temperature increase to 1.5°C. The Global Stocktake at COP28 offers opportunities to enhance action on mitigation and adaptation. While adapting to climate change, we need to take swift further steps towards ensuring that global greenhouse gas emissions peak by 2025 at the latest, including by phasing out unabated fossil fuels. Science, technology and innovation will play a key role in this regard, requiring strong international cooperation.

14. Global average temperature increase will result in severe impacts for many countries and communities, particularly Least Developed Countries and Small Island Developing States. It is therefore crucial that we continue the collective effort to adapt to climate change, including through mainstreaming adaptation into national development plans. In parallel, we need to strengthen our engagement multilaterally. The model of the ‘Just Energy Transition Partnership’ developed with South Africa, Vietnam, Indonesia, and Senegal is a step further in decarbonisation and accelerating renewables deployment and phasing down coal. Learning from this, we should pool our resources, work together to prioritise global action on renewable energy and energy efficiency, and start delivering concrete results at COP28 in Dubai, highlighting both the urgency and the opportunity of climate action. The Climate Ambition Summit in September will be another important occasion to foster our joint commitments ahead of COP28 and send clear political signals on the expectations for the outcome of the Global Stocktake.
15. The EU has lent its support to the request for an Advisory Opinion of the International Court of Justice on the obligations of States with respect to climate change. The EU remains committed to promoting the individual and collective action of States to prevent and respond to the threat of climate change and to show solidarity with those particularly vulnerable to the impacts of climate change.
16. Sustainable, climate resilient and efficient water management, including of transboundary waters, is critical to the achievement of the entire 2030 Agenda, as confirmed at the UN Water Conference in March 2023. At the global level, the priority is to promote a UN system-wide approach to water, to ensure better synergies between sectors and a continued dialogue on water related issues. The EU supports the establishment of a UN Special Envoy for Water who should play a key role in strengthening governance at the global level as well as the implementation of the Water Action Agenda.

17. Urgent action is crucial to halt and reverse biodiversity loss, which is essential for safeguarding vital ecosystem services as well as climate change mitigation and adaptation and disaster-risk-reduction. The EU welcomes the Global Biodiversity Framework, which sets a roadmap to protect, restore and use nature in a sustainable way, and the EU will partner with the most vulnerable and biodiverse countries to ensure its swift implementation. The EU also welcomes the recently established Global Biodiversity Framework Fund under the Global Environmental Facility, whose goal is to support countries in their ability to protect, restore and ensure the sustainable use of nature. The EU welcomes the adoption of the Agreement under the United Nations Convention on the Law of the Sea (UNCLOS) on the conservation and sustainable use of marine biological biodiversity of areas beyond national jurisdiction (BBNJ). The EU and its Member States are committed to the swift ratification and implementation of this landmark agreement and urge all States to do the same. The EU remains committed to and will continue to promote the strengthening of international ocean governance, including within relevant multilateral fora and in particular at the 2025 UN Ocean Conference. The Global Biodiversity Framework and the Agreement on Biodiversity beyond National Jurisdictions as well as the negotiations on a global work towards a Plastics treaty are areas where the UN membership has chosen the path of multilateralism because there is a common interest in proving that multilateralism can deliver, even in difficult times.

18. Anticipating future health threats, we must learn the lessons of recent years and break the cycle of crisis and neglect between pandemics and health emergencies by promoting a more coherent, integrated, action-oriented and adequately and sustainably financed global health agenda – also with a view to deliver better on the SDGs. In this regard, we look forward to adopting three political declarations at the High-Level meetings on Pandemic Prevention, Preparedness and Response, on Universal Health Coverage, and on Tuberculosis during High-Level Week in September 2023. These meetings will be key to enhancing high-level political leadership, multi-sectoral, whole-of-government and whole-of-society approaches as well as sustainable financing in support of strengthened national health systems and a strong global health architecture with the World Health Organisation at its core. The outcomes should reinforce the One Health approach, foster equitable access to medical countermeasures and ensure strong political momentum for the negotiations on a future Pandemic Agreement. The EU will continue to push for an ambitious and legally-binding instrument on pandemic prevention, preparedness and response as well as for strengthened International Health Regulations, both to be adopted by the World Health Assembly in 2024.

II. Strengthening global governance in line with “Our Common Agenda”

19. The current multilateral system requires adaptation to cope with current and upcoming global challenges, including accelerating the implementation of the SDGs as well as promoting peace and preventing conflict. That is why the EU strongly supports the global governance reforms proposed by the UN Secretary-General in ‘Our Common Agenda’ aimed at reinvigorating the multilateral system and making it more inclusive, more networked, and more effective. It is our collective responsibility to support the Secretary-General’s ambition. The EU is committed to playing a leading role in the implementation of these reform strands. This includes continued support to the revitalisation of the UN General Assembly towards making the UN more efficient, transparent, and accountable.

20. The EU is fully committed to playing a leading role with a view to achieving an ambitious and action-oriented “Pact for the Future” as the outcome at the Summit of the Future in 2024, and will continue its constructive engagement on the proposed deliverables. This is a unique opportunity to upgrade the United Nations and make it fit for the future. The EU underlines the need to fully mainstream the human rights dimension throughout the Pact. The EU welcomes the report by the High-Level Advisory Board on Effective Multilateralism, containing ambitious and bold proposals towards a more effective and inclusive global governance. To this end, the EU will also seek to ensure greater coherence between the UN’s work and the agendas of the G7 and the G20. As proof to our commitment to fairer, more effective and more accountable global systems, the EU also supports a seat for the African Union at the G20.
21. As part of the “Pact for the Future”, a ‘New Agenda for Peace’ must express a renewed vow of all nations to respect the principles of the UN Charter, to maintain international peace and security, and refrain from the threat or use of force. The New Agenda for Peace is an opportunity to shape new responses against old and new threats, including by strengthening prevention, adapting UN peacekeeping to this new environment, and strengthening the peacebuilding architecture, including by ensuring adequate, predictable and sustained financing for peacebuilding and implementing the Women, Peace and Security agenda in all its dimensions as well as the Youth, Peace and Security agenda. It should contribute to preserving, implementing and further strengthening the global architecture for arms control, disarmament and non-proliferation, as well as multilateral export control regimes. The New Agenda for Peace should strengthen multilateral cooperation to prevent and counter terrorism and violent extremism, hybrid attacks, as well as cyber-related risks in full compliance with international law, including human rights law. It should also reinforce global governance for the peaceful, secure and sustainable use of outer space, and aim to strengthen synergies amongst the various governance initiatives to reinforce space security. Strong partnerships between the UN, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and other international and regional organisations are essential for a networked, inclusive and effective global system to tackle today’s strategic risks for peace and security.

22. The EU reiterates its commitment to adequate, predictable and sustainable financing of African Union (AU)-led peace support operations and supports the use of UN-assessed contributions for such operations authorised by the UN Security Council on the basis of the conclusions of the UN Secretary General’s report and in compliance with relevant agreed standards and mechanisms, including the implementation of the AU human rights compliance framework.
23. The EU supports comprehensive reform of the UN Security Council (UNSC) towards making it more effective, inclusive, transparent, democratic, and accountable and better reflecting today’s realities by strengthening the voice of underrepresented regions, especially but not limited to Africa. The EU also welcomes efforts towards increasing transparency and accountability of the Security Council. In this regard, the EU welcomes the landmark UNGA resolution on the use of the veto and supports further strengthening the relationship between the General Assembly and the Security Council, including on matters related to the maintenance of international peace and security, consistent with the UN Charter. The EU fully supports the French / Mexican initiative on veto restraint in cases of mass atrocities, as well as the “Code of Conduct regarding Security Council action against genocide, crimes against humanity and war crimes”. It is important to use the linkages between the Peacebuilding Commission and the UNSC more systematically in order to support peace efforts on all continents.
24. The EU will continue to promote compliance with International Humanitarian Law, and will advocate unhindered access to persons in need and principled humanitarian action. The EU will continue to engage with a view to opening negotiations for a Convention on the prevention and punishment of crimes against humanity to strengthen accountability and ensure the prosecution of such crimes. The EU will continue to promote the universality of the Rome Statute and support for and cooperation with all international courts and tribunals, in particular the International Criminal Court, and international investigative mechanisms seeking accountability. The EU is firmly committed to promote accountability and increased coordination and effective action to address all alleged international crimes around the world including alleged international crimes committed in Ukraine, including the crime of aggression.

25. The Global Digital Compact, as one of the foreseen outcomes of the Summit of the Future, should serve as a roadmap for human-centric, human rights-based shared global principles for a digital future. It should be ambitious and express a clear vision that provides a framework for related activities across the UN system, deeply rooted in respect for human rights. The opportunities that digital technologies offer should be harnessed, including the potential to accelerate and contribute to the achievement of the SDGs. We expect the Global Digital Compact to support an open, stable, free, and inclusive access to a global, interoperable, reliable, secure and sustainable Internet, and to promote its multi-stakeholder model. Artificial Intelligence has become an area of strategic importance and should be guided by a human-centric and pro-innovation approach based on human rights, democracy and the rule of law. The EU will contribute to the Global Digital Compact by working with partners and forming alliances on human rights online and connectivity.
26. The UN Tech Envoy has a unique chance to improve coherence and coordination of the UN on digital issues while supporting and promoting the multi-stakeholder model of internet governance, which is open, inclusive and decentralised. The EU will continue its efforts to uphold a global, open, stable, free, secure and peaceful cyberspace and underscores its commitment to uphold the UN normative framework for responsible state behaviour in cyberspace and to promote the establishment of a Programme of Action to advance responsible state behaviour in cyberspace in 2025. The EU further supports the preparations for a Code of Conduct for information integrity on digital platforms, to ensure accountability of the multiple actors at play in the information environment and to support capacity building in order to foster societies resilient to disinformation.

27. The Emergency Platform initiative is an important way to ensure a better coordinated and more coherent global response to complex global crises – one that prioritises the needs of the most affected and vulnerable communities. To respond to the severity and complexity of future global shocks, the initiative must be inclusive, gathering a variety of stakeholders. The EU supports the proposal that such a platform would not be a standing body or entity, but rather be made up of a set of protocols, to be activated when needed, building upon improved existing tools and mechanisms. It should make best use of available foresight and early warning data and analysis to provide for evidence-based and informed decisions throughout the response.
28. An increased focus on education and youth is one of the main pillars of ‘Our Common Agenda’ and should be reflected in a Declaration on Future Generations. Meaningful youth engagement needs to become a pattern in all UN decision-making processes by expanding and strengthening full, equal and meaningful participation of young persons and youth organisations at all levels across the world. Inclusive and equal access to quality education is the bedrock of sustainable development and the EU supports an ambitious follow-up to the Transforming Education Summit, not least through the negotiations on the “Pact for the Future”.
29. The social dimension also deserves our close attention. The EU is therefore looking forward towards actively engaging in the preparations of the World Social Summit with a view to fostering social inclusion and social justice, promoting an inclusive social dialogue on issues such as advancing universal social protection, creating decent jobs, or enhancing green and digital skills.

III. Building partnerships

30. The EU reaffirms its conviction that the major challenges of our time, by their nature and global scope, cannot be addressed by countries acting alone but must be tackled together. In the current geopolitical context marked by growing fragmentation and polarisation, the EU will remain a constructive, principled and reliable partner, seeking to bring all stakeholders together and enabling dialogue as a common effort to find sustainable solutions to global challenges based on the UN Charter, international law and human rights. Partnerships have proved to be helpful in navigating the most pressing challenges and multiple crises we are facing. We will continue to listen to the concerns of our partners and will remain sensitive to the global imbalances that affect the most vulnerable countries, in order to better address their interests and needs. This includes the EU's strong engagement in the preparations for the fourth International Conference on Small Island Developing States and the third United Nations Conference on Landlocked Developing Countries, both to be held in 2024.
31. The EU will step up its cooperation with partners from other regions to tap the full potential of existing partnerships and to ensure more effective engagement on shared priorities in the multilateral system. The EU's Summits with regional organisations and partners such as the EU–AU Summit, EU–ASEAN Summit or the EU–CELAC Summit demonstrate the strength of our strategic partnerships and joint commitment to promote effective multilateralism and the rules-based international order worldwide. We will continue to conduct structured dialogues with regional groups within the UN to pursue joint initiatives and priorities. We will build new alliances with partner countries, reinforce cooperation with multilateral and regional organisations.
32. Civil society and other stakeholders have a crucial role to play. In the spirit of a truly inclusive and networked multilateralism, the EU is committed to promoting the meaningful participation of a diverse and independent civil society and all other stakeholders in UN decision-making processes.