



# Increasing the Impact of the European Union at the United Nations in New York



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## Disclaimer

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## Preface

For many years, there have been loud and clear calls for the European Union (EU) to become a more cohesive foreign policy player that 'speaks with one voice' and brings to bear the unified political weight of Europe in international affairs. With a few notable exceptions, these calls have produced very limited results. The EU, despite its formal aspirations for a Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), has not been able to transform itself into a heavyweight in international diplomacy. By and large, its relevance in the global arena comes mainly through its weight as a unified trading bloc and through the relative wealth of its core members. In the realm of security and defense and international crisis management, the EU is mostly perceived as a lightweight dependent on the United States for its security and the protection of its interests around the world.

When U.S. president Donald Trump adjusted American diplomacy on multilateral affairs in an unprecedented and alienating way, calls for a more independent EU posture in international affairs became louder. Trump's open threats to the EU and its trade policy, to NATO, to global climate change policy, the withdrawal from the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA) with Iran, and a number of other decisions, confirmed the feel for a need to strengthen European foreign policy strategies and instruments.

One possible arena in which the 'European Moment' in foreign policy could play out is the United Nations (UN). The UN stands for the very multilateral approach to foreign policy that most Europeans cherish and that they deem worthy of protection. For a long time, EU Member States have aspired to coordinate their political positions in the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly (UNGA), and in the Funds and Programmes of the UN System.

The task of demonstrating EU leadership in the UN comes against a backdrop of doubts about U.S. commitment to multilateralism but also by a change in the geopolitical landscape with China's new assertiveness in foreign and security policy.

In addition, Europe faces the rise of nationalist governments for which multilateral cooperation comes least on the agenda; if they are not openly hostile in the first place and as it happened in the case of the approval of the UN Global Compact on Migration.

It is against this background that Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung (KAS) New York initiated at the end of 2018 a project in cooperation with the German Marshall Fund named 'Strengthening the European Voice at the United Nations.' It aims to identify key factors towards a more coherent and effective voice of Europe at the UN. What needs to be done and which obstacles need to be overcome in



order to strengthen Europe's contribution to multilateralism in the UN context? In 2019, the project brought together experts from academia and think tanks, representatives of European governments as well as EU and UN representatives, in order to discuss how the voice of Europe at the UN could be further strengthened.

The project as such deliberately speaks of Europe and includes European countries such as Norway, Switzerland and the United Kingdom as we believe that at a time when multilateralism faces many challenges, it is not only the EU as the embodiment of multilateralism but also like-minded states that have a role to play.

In a next step and hopefully without travel and personal interaction constraints by the COVID-19 pandemic, the discussions will be reinitiated in 2021, and will particularly reach out to stakeholders in European capitals and EU Member States.

The present study undertaken by Wasim Mir, UN Foundation and Sebastian Borchmeyer, KAS Office New York forms part of the project 'Strengthening the Voice of Europe at the UN.' However, its methodological approach is zooming in as it focuses on the European Union, its positioning and impact in selected New York based UN institutions. It does not include the impact and influence of the EU in UN bodies in Geneva nor does it analyze specifically Brussels-based processes. It nevertheless provides valuable insights into the dynamics of consultation, coordination and cooperation amongst EU-Member States and the strife to provide a coherent and strong voice of the EU in New York.

The added value of the study derives from its primary sources. Over 25 New York based experts and practitioners have been interviewed and consulted (Permanent Representatives of EU Member States and others, including Heads of Observer Missions or Deputy Permanent Representatives, UN Under-Secretary-Generals and Assistant-Secretary-Generals, academics, technical staff of the UN, the EU and from EU Member States) by the authors who themselves bring along a broad experience of working with and in UN institutions.

Although and irrespective of the new take on multilateral affairs by the in-coming Biden administration, current world politics might not be considered favorable for a stronger voice of Europe at the UN for some time being. Nevertheless, geopolitical dynamics can also provide a chance to boost Europe's influence when staying united and grounded in its own norms and values. Small and medium sized powers are cautious about the new assertiveness of China and concerned about unilateral approaches in general.

However, a precondition for success and a stronger European voice will always be to stay united.

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## Executive Summary

Covid-19, coupled with recent geopolitical changes, have put the United Nations (UN) under unprecedented strain. The future of the UN is more precarious than at any time in its 75-year history. The European Union (EU) and its Member States have played a pivotal role in supporting the UN since its creation. A rule-based international system, with the UN at its core, is central to delivering the EU's foreign policy objectives. An effective EU presence in the UN also helps ensure a stronger UN. Closer coordination, led by the EU Delegation, has increased the EU's performance in the UN in New York over the last eight years but there is still more to do. With major powers undermining the rule-based international system, and the United Kingdom's exit from the EU, the EU faces new challenges in the UN. At the same time, these shifting dynamics also create a unique opportunity to evaluate and strengthen the EU's performance in the UN. This paper looks at how the EU and its Member States can build on this historic moment to further increase its impact in the UN. Specifically, the paper analyzes how the EU and its Member States operate in the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA), Security Council, Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) as well as how they interact with the UN Secretariat and New York-based UN Funds and Programmes. The authors make specific practical recommendations on how to enhance the EU's performance in each fora with a view to generating an in-depth discussion amongst EU Member States.

## Introduction



Multilateralism is in Europe's DNA. It is our guiding principle in the world. My Commission will keep on championing this approach and ensure that we uphold and update the rules based global order. We are on the right path and have achieved a lot over recent years, but major challenges remain. We must be ambitious, strategic and assertive in the way that we act in the world. We must build on our strengths, confront and address our vulnerabilities, and enhance our legitimacy."

- *My Agenda for Europe, President Ursula von der Leyen*

Since the UN's creation in 1945, European countries have been amongst its most fervent backers. European nations have not only shaped and funded the UN but have also benefitted from an international order within which they have traditionally enjoyed disproportionate influence. Not only is multilateralism in Europe's DNA, as President von der Leyen states in her agenda, but the global nature of threats—such as climate change and pandemics—demand the closer collaboration that the multilateral system was set up to provide.

The Covid-19 pandemic has made it clear that the UN, and multilateralism in general, are facing new and daunting challenges. When global coordination was needed most, some countries turned away from the UN. This is part of a wider trend. From the UN Security Council that is unable to act in a timely way on the most pressing issues, to a perpetual budget crisis, the UN is struggling. The immediate cause may seem simple—a U.S. administration that is openly hostile to a rule-based international system it helped construct. But even before the election of President Trump in 2016, the multilateral system faced a period of uncertainty. Geopolitical power dynamics were already oscillating as China continued its journey towards becoming an economic and political superpower and as Russia tried to reassert its role on the world stage. Today, the highs of 2015/2016, when UN Member States signed the Paris Climate Agreement and the Sustainable Development Goals, seem like a distant memory. And while a new U.S. administration should provide some respite, the age of ever-increasing multilateral cooperation will not return without a concerted effort.

The EU's support for multilateralism is not in doubt. The EU has an unmatched track record in supporting multilateral institutions, which builds on a strong legal footing in the EU Treaties. The Treaty on European Union (TEU) commits the EU to aspire to 'multilateral solutions to common problems, particularly in the framework of the United Nations'<sup>1</sup> and to contribute 'to the strict observance and the development of international law, including respect for the principles of the United Nations Charter.'<sup>2</sup> The Treaty on the Functioning of the European Union stipulates that 'the Union shall establish all appropriate forms of cooperation with the organs of the United Nations and its specialised agencies.'<sup>3</sup>

Multilateralism is also crucial to the way EU citizens think about the world because they largely expect their foreign policy to be delivered through rule-based international institutions.<sup>4</sup> But in the changing global context, the EU and its Member States need to think carefully about how they can help sustain the multilateral system and the UN. This will require a clear-headed strategy for engagement. While the EU should aim to keep other countries, in particular China and the U.S., anchored within a framework of UN structures and rules, it should not be dependent on their leadership. A commitment to multilateralism should not equate to uncritical support for the UN as it currently operates. The EU has been at the forefront of pushing for changes to the multilateral system when needed and should continue to push for changes particularly where structures and processes are no longer fit for purpose.

For the EU to be successful, it will also have to look critically at the European Union itself in the multilateral system, what the EU prioritizes, and how it operates. Much analysis has been done about what the EU should prioritize. Ideas have been put forward on areas where the EU should place greater emphasis.<sup>5</sup> This paper will complement that work by focusing on how the EU operates.

Drawing on interviews with those familiar with the work of the EU at the UN and the academic literature in this field, this paper contemplates how the EU currently operates at the UN in New York. It neither closely examines how the EU operates in Geneva, Vienna or other locations across the world; nor does it inspect the policy formulation process in Brussels. A narrower scope of analysis has allowed us to focus the paper on operational recommendations for enhancing the work of the EU rather than broad policy proposals.



*On the occasion of the first meeting of the College, Ursula von der Leyen, President of the European Commission, held a press conference on the organization, working methods and responsibilities of the new Commission.*

# History of the European Union at the United Nations

Both the UN and the EU can trace their origins back to the conflicts that ravaged Europe in the twentieth century. Four of the six founding members of the European Economic Community (EEC) were also founding members of the UN. With both organizations predicated on international cooperation, mutual support has, from the outset, seemed natural.

In the early years of the UN, collaboration between EEC members in the UN was not always prominent,<sup>6</sup> not least because West Germany initially only held observer status. Despite these limitations, the European Commission first opened an information office in New York in 1964.

By 1970, the members of the EEC initiated the European Political Cooperation, the progenitor of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), which was introduced in the Maastricht Treaty of 1993. By 1971, the then six members of the EEC began consultations in New York on political matters on the agenda of the UN General Assembly (UNGA).

Following West Germany becoming a full member of the UN in 1973, the EEC was able to push for a more formal role in the UNGA. On 11 October 1974, the UNGA adopted Resolution 3308 (XXIX) on the Status of the EEC in the General Assembly inviting the EEC to participate in the sessions and work of the UNGA as an observer. The EEC was the first non-state entity to be granted permanent observer status in the UN. It subsequently obtained official diplomatic status in 1976 and established a diplomatic Mission.<sup>7</sup> From the beginning, the EEC operation in New York reflected the split distribution of responsibilities in the EEC with one delegate coming from the country holding the rotating EEC Presidency and another coming from the European Commission.

In parallel to gaining observer status, by 1973 the nine members of the EEC agreed that they would 'participate in international negotiations in an outward-looking spirit and adopt common positions wherever possible in international organizations, notably the United Nations and the Specialized Agencies.'<sup>8</sup> Soon after, the country that held the Council Presidency began the practice of delivering statements on behalf of the foreign ministers of all the Member States of the EEC in the UNGA.

With the coming into force of the Maastricht Treaty and the creation of the EU, the European Community – one of the EU's three pillars alongside CFSP and Justice and Home Affairs – inherited the EEC's international role and observer seat in the UNGA. In subsequent years, coordination amongst the members of the EU deepened and extended to more of the work of the General Assembly.



Because of the intergovernmental nature of the UN, the EU was formally represented by the EU Member State holding the six-monthly rotating Presidency apart from discussions of exclusive community competence (e.g., trade policy).

While the EU Presidency continued to make statements on behalf of all EU Member States at formal meetings of the UNGA and its main committees post-Maastricht, the details of how the EU and its Member States interacted and represented themselves in different stages of negotiations evolved over time. Even though Member States exercised their right to make statements and intervene in formal meetings of the UNGA and main committees, individual Member State interventions became less frequent and were mostly aligned to the EU position.

Led by representatives of the Presidency, EU Member States began coordinating positions across almost all negotiations in the UNGA. The UN Secretariat, in consultation with Member States, began a practice of keeping Wednesday afternoons free from negotiations to allow groups to coordinate their positions. The Presidency started using early mornings and lunchtimes for additional coordination sessions as negotiations progressed.

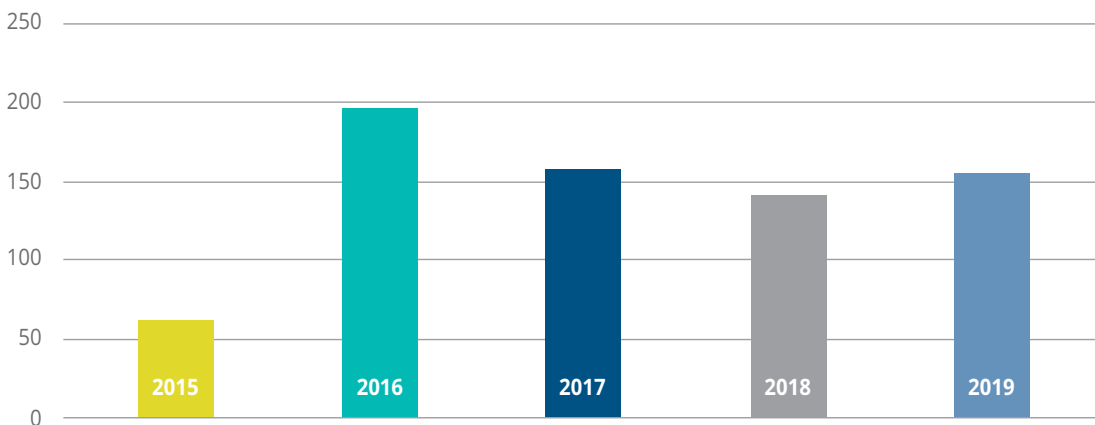
The practice of interventions in informal negotiations also evolved but varied across different negotiations with the EU relying on a single voice in some and deploying multiple voices in others. Importantly, it soon became evident that placing the burden of leading negotiations in the busiest areas, such as the Second Committee and Fifth Committee, was too great for the Presidency to take on alone. The EU therefore began to develop a system of *burden-sharing* with delegates from EU Member States asked to lead on specific negotiations.

The coming into force of the Lisbon Treaty in 2009 and establishment of a High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy increased policy coherence in external affairs. After overcoming initial resistance from other regional groups<sup>9</sup> the UNGA—with the adoption of Resolution 65/276 on 3 May 2011—granted the EU enhanced observer status.<sup>10</sup> Because permanent observer status is not provided for in the UN Charter,<sup>11</sup> the details of how it operates relies on UNGA agreement. The resolution granted the EU all the rights afforded to UN Member States except: the right to vote, co-sponsor draft resolutions or decisions, or put forward candidates. In addition, the EU agreed not to claim the right to raise points of order or to speak for the EU on points of order and procedure.<sup>12</sup>

Equally important, the Lisbon Treaty moved responsibility for both speaking on behalf of the EU and coordination amongst EU Member States from the rotating Presidency to the EU Delegation to the United Nations; which took on ‘responsibility for the full process of negotiations and representation from start to finish’ and ‘ensuring continuity of work and effectiveness.’<sup>13</sup> The Lisbon Treaty and Resolution 65/276 have had a dramatic impact on how the EU operates in the UNGA by raising the profile of the EU Delegation. There was a significant rise<sup>14</sup> in the number of interventions made by the Delegation after the adoption of Resolution 65/276 and a consistent approach to intervening thereafter.

**Provisions of Resolution 65/276:**

- (a) Allowed to be inscribed on the list of speakers among representatives of major groups, in order to make interventions;
- (b) Invited to participate in the general debate of the General Assembly, in accordance with the order of precedence as established in the practice for participating observers and the level of participation;
- (c) Permitted to have its communications relating to the sessions and work of the General Assembly and to the sessions and work of all international meetings and conferences convened under the auspices of the Assembly and of United Nations conferences, circulated directly, and without intermediary, as documents of the Assembly, meeting or conference;
- (d) Also permitted to present proposals and amendments orally as agreed by the States members of the European Union; such proposals and amendments shall be put to a vote only at the request of a Member State;
- (e) Allowed to exercise the right of reply regarding positions of the European Union as decided by the presiding officer; such right of reply shall be restricted to one intervention per item.

**Chart 1** Number of EU statements in the UNGA from 2015-2019.**EU Statements in the General Assembly**

Source: EU Delegation to the UN in New York.

# The European Union and the United Nations General Assembly

## Footprint of the European Union at the United Nations General Assembly

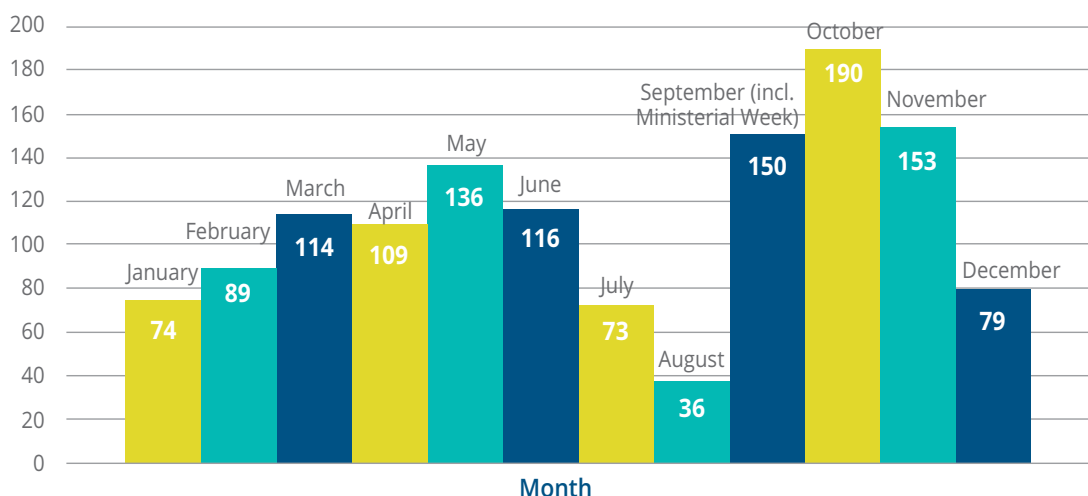
There is little doubt that the EU is a major force in the UNGA, which is considered to be 'the premier site of collective legitimacy in international politics.'<sup>15</sup> The EU has been described as the most organized of any group within the UN System with an unparalleled coordination machinery, which operates in an inclusive way.<sup>16</sup> This contrasts with the Group of 77 (G77) and China which rely on 'implicit consensus building'<sup>17</sup> with a small group of activist countries taking the policy lead on most negotiations while the majority only engage to a limited degree. Combined with the burden-sharing approach, this means the EU is able to rely on considerable negotiating strength. Enhancements to the EU Delegation after the Lisbon treaty have also contributed to an increased impact by the EU. The EU Delegation has grown from 23 staff members in 2010<sup>18</sup> to 59 staff members today,<sup>19</sup> making it one of the biggest delegations in New York. In addition, the strength of the EU's standing in UNGA reflects the fact that its Member States 'refined multilateralism among themselves to quite a degree' through the EU frameworks and brought this experience to the UN.<sup>20</sup>

On the other hand, there is a strong perception among European diplomats that the EU and its Member States do not project the influence the EU should—given the political and economic weight of its individual Member States in world affairs—and that they have not always found a way of trans-

lating its significant financial contributions to the UN into real political leverage. The 27 EU Member States only represent 14% of the UN membership, far short of the majority required for UNGA decisions. This means the EU



*Ursula von der Leyen (on screens), President of the European Commission, addresses the General Assembly high-level meeting on the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women.*

**Chart 2 Number of EU coordination meetings in 2019.****31<sup>st</sup> Floor Meetings at the Delegation of the European Union to the UN**

Source: EU Delegation to the UN in New York in 2019.

needs to build alliances with other countries to reach a majority in the UNGA. For important issues such as budget and administrative matters, the EU has relied on the practice of working for consensus to ensure they have influence. But working for consensus seems to come under attack. An example was the vote in the UNGA to enlarge the Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions (ACABQ) by G77 delegations despite the opposition from most of the UN's biggest contributors—in breach of the UNGA's practice of deciding budget matters on the basis of consensus.<sup>21</sup>

## European Union Cohesion in the United Nations General Assembly post-Lisbon

Within the EU there is a strong belief that coherence is a key strength and a requirement for successful negotiations. Cohesion is achieved by an intense schedule of coordination meetings mostly at the expert level meant to achieve common positions. The EU Delegation hosts well over a thousand coordination meetings a year and the majority of these are aimed at aligning EU positions and tactics for negotiations in the UNGA and its main committees (see chart 2). Estimates from 2009 claim that the accumulated expenditure of time of all EU coordination meetings held in New York over the course of one single year represents the equivalent of 75 working years.<sup>22</sup> The meeting schedule is particularly intense in the spring and the autumn when some, or all, of the main committees of the UNGA are in session. When there are disagreements or particularly important discussions at the expert level, these can be referred up to the Heads of Mission (HoMs) level. In recent years, there have also been frequent meetings of the Deputy Permanent Representatives to discuss common approaches on UNGA matters.<sup>23</sup>

A number of academic researchers have looked into EU coherence at the UN and the impact of the Lisbon Treaty. Coherence has broadly been viewed as an advantage for the EU's performance at the UN. They have noted that there is evidence of deep coherence amongst EU Member States in the

UNGA particularly when votes on decolonization and nuclear disarmament—where France and the United Kingdom have particular national positions—are excluded from calculations.<sup>24</sup> There has also been an increase in cohesion since the implementation of the Lisbon Treaty.<sup>25</sup> Academic researchers observed a 'socialization effect,' which shows that the longer a country is a member of the EU, the probability of casting a deviating vote would decrease.<sup>26</sup> When compared to other groupings, the EU also stands out in the scope of coherence and coordination provided through the existence of well-functioning internal structures and working methods.<sup>27</sup> Although there have been some high profile cases of EU disagreement in recent years, such as the Global Compact for Migration, these remain the exception and not the rule.

While the orthodoxy prevails that coherence is a positive—or even a prerequisite—of being effective,<sup>28</sup> some commentators expressed concerns that the way the EU operates, and the time and effort devoted to seeking an aligned EU position, may be detrimental to achieving a positive outcome for the EU in the UNGA.<sup>29</sup> There are broadly three concerns:

First, that the amount of time and effort devoted to establishing an agreed upon position and ironing out small differences in positions that are broadly aligned may distract from the important effort of engaging with third countries whose support is vital to achieving a positive outcome in the UNGA and for building cross-regional alliances. Coordination has tied up resources within the EU27 diplomatic services that has made the EU 'inward looking'<sup>30</sup> and even 'self-referential'<sup>31</sup> and 'self-centered.'<sup>32</sup> Coordination can 'tie up diplomats for hours every day' with multiple meetings, on different issues, being held simultaneously, 'straining the capacities of member states with small missions to the UN.'<sup>33</sup> Diplomats have also observed that the EU policy in the UN at times lacks agility and is 'frozen in aspect,' because it is tied to decisions made in EU meetings in Brussels or there is too little flexibility in the capitals.<sup>34</sup> The nature of intergovernmental negotiations, however, requires a degree of dynamism in order to be able to respond to factors as situations evolve. This is aggravated by the fact that EU common statements are seen as being overly formulaic, often constituting the lowest common denominator in a position. The EU's perceived inability to use 'authoritative and passionate language' could at times hinder its ability to influence the wider UN membership.<sup>35</sup>

Second, there is a related concern that reaching EU positions involve carefully balancing the views of different Member States and leaving limited space for EU negotiators to think creatively about possible compromises. Delegates leading negotiations on behalf of the EU may become wary of discussing or even contemplating ideas that fall outside the agreed EU position. On occasion this has meant that other negotiating groups simply work around the EU and present a *fait accompli* to EU negotiators.

Third, there is a possible negative impact on other negotiating groups. The EU's move towards greater coordination has been mirrored by other groupings, such as the G77, China, and the Non-Aligned Movement.<sup>36</sup> These other groupings do not always match the EU in respect to internal organization and supporting structures, which in turn may make it easier for their positions to be captured by hardliners within these groups making negotiations more difficult. Academic researchers have observed that in the field of human rights, the fact that the EU acts in such a unified way, other states would be 'forced' to act in regional and political groups in order to protect and advance their own preferences. EU activity would almost automatically spark resistance by other states. They described



a 'tension between the imperatives of collective action in the wider international system and the imperative not to act as a bloc in the UN.'<sup>37</sup> However, it is noticeable that successful negotiations in recent years—such as the 2016 alignment on the Paris Climate Agreement and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development—were only possible once smaller groupings, such as the Alliance of Small Island States, started taking on a bigger role.

An illustrative example of this challenge are the negotiations leading up to the adoption of Resolution 65/276 in 2011 to enhance the EU's observer status in the UNGA. The adoption of the document was preceded by the failure in the previous year to secure agreement in the General Assembly to even consider a resolution<sup>38</sup> that suggested an ambitious change in the EU's status. The lessons learned from this failure indicated that there were shortcomings in both the EU's negotiating strategy (including timing of the introduction of the resolution) as well as substance of the proposals (impact on the intergovernmental nature of the UNGA). In addition, given the unexpected nature of the vote, there was a failure to understand the dynamics of the General Assembly and position of others. Ultimately, this reflected a difference in perspective between the EU and the wider UN membership. The EU appeared to believe it was simply seeking an administrative change while those outside perceived it as the EU seeking special privileges.

Diplomats also highlighted the importance of being aware of the 'political optics' of too great an emphasis on coherence and speaking with a single voice. In many instances in the UNGA, the EU delivers a joint statement as the first speaker in the room, which is subsequently followed by a 'cacophony of voices'<sup>39</sup> putting forward alternative and countering arguments giving the impression that the EU is isolated. The EU lacks the ability to 'engage in a call-and-response;' this would require anticipating the arguments from the other side and to formulate rebuttals.<sup>40</sup>

We recommend that the EU move to an arrangement in which EU interventions in the General Assembly on certain topics are reinforced by interventions in line with the agreed EU position from EU Member States speaking in their national capacity. On issues such as human rights, for example, it would be advantageous to have EU Member States speaking in support of the EU statement to counter possible perceptions that the EU position does not have widespread support, as well as directly address (and 'fact-check') statements given by other countries.

On balance the evidence suggests that EU cohesion is a considerable advantage and EU Member States should continue to strive for greater cohesion. As a remedy for the dangers of an overly inward focus created by the processes of coordinating positions, the EU should consider moving towards agreeing on an overall policy line and allowing the EU Delegation/Negotiators flexibility on the detailed wording of statements. There may be specific cases where Member States need to align on the detailed wording but this should be kept to a minimum.<sup>41</sup>

We recommend that EU HoMs discuss how to move to a more flexible approach to coordination in order to maximize impact.

## Negotiating in the United Nations General Assembly

Being influential in multilateral negotiations requires more than achieving a common position. Academic researchers highlight two strategic approaches that have proven to be effective bargaining methods in UNGA affairs: *tied-hand* and *persuasion-based* negotiation strategies.<sup>42</sup> Tied-hand strategies involve a two-level game where a representative of the EU27 would 'flag that they have coordinated a common stance within their group and that they cannot compromise on the UN-level,<sup>43</sup> claiming that they are 'bound by group decisions that cannot be untied.<sup>44</sup> Tied-hand strategies have been shown to be an effective bargaining chip in those cases where a sponsor seeks to achieve a consensual rather than a voted resolution or if the EU is in a pivotal position for a voted resolution.<sup>45</sup> However, they are only effective when the positions are explained in great detail.<sup>46</sup>

While this strategy could work in cases where the EU has defensive interests, persuasion-based negotiation strategies—in particular strategies making reference to 'universally accepted legal norms, scientific insights or shared values—have more promising results in those instances where the EU27 risk being outvoted.<sup>47</sup> Academic researchers argue that using the size of UN contributions or development aid payments as leverage in negotiations has shown little success.<sup>48</sup> Most interviewees also felt that the European countries should refrain from using power politics as a bargaining strategy because this did not reflect the EU's values and could be counterproductive in the long term.<sup>49</sup>

In order to maximize its impact in the General Assembly, the EU needs to retain its strengths in respect to coordination, coherence, and strength in numbers while also introducing more agility in the way the EU interacts ahead of and during negotiations. Negotiating effectiveness is linked to negotiating experience. Post-Lisbon, the EU has continued the practice of burden-sharing in the UNGA with teams formed of delegates from the EU and individual Member States leading on negotiations. This now extends to all major negotiations in the UNGA. Burden-sharing in the General Assembly is seen as a significant success and asset for the EU at the expert level. The processes also help 'diplomats find their way through the demanding agendas and technical nature of negotiations.<sup>50</sup>

We recommend that the European External Action Services (EEAS) and EU Member States collectively consider how they could enhance their collective diplomatic skills base. In the short term, this could involve training sessions and retreats aimed specifically at enhancing UN tradecraft while over the longer term a move to an EU multilateral diplomacy academy could be useful.

The EU Delegation and Member States should consider how they can further embed the improvements in diplomatic skills achieved through burden-sharing by ensuring lessons are captured, retained, and shared with future diplomats. This could be done in an informal way or through more formal structures. Countries as diverse as Australia and the United Arab Emirates have in recent years opened Diplomatic Academies which aimed at training officials in international engagement tradecraft including advocacy, negotiation, forecasting, and strategic planning.

## Outreach with the wider United Nations Membership

The nature of the General Assembly means that to achieve its objectives, the EU Delegation and Member States need to persuade other delegations to support their positions. Persuasion does not just rely on formal negotiations. Effective diplomacy requires a multifaceted approach centered on effective outreach to non-EU Member States. Outreach can take many forms ranging from formal meetings bringing together all EU Ambassadors to informal bilateral meetings between EU Delegation and Member State diplomats with their counterparts.

The Head of the EU Delegation hosts lunches for all EU Ambassadors with counterparts from key countries. In recent years, individual lunch meetings with the Permanent Representatives of the U.S., China, Russia, Japan and India have been held once a year. The lunches are relatively formal with agreed agendas. All interlocutors we interviewed found these meetings to be extremely valuable.

We recommend that the formal EU Ambassador level lunches with key countries are extended to other likeminded partners such as the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the CANZ countries (i.e., Canada, Australia and New Zealand).

Similarly, formal outreach sessions are held with other major groups such as the G77 and China, CARICOM, CELAC and the Africa Group. Hosted at the EU Delegation to the UN, the other major groups are represented by a limited number of ambassadors including the past, present and future chairs. The EU side is represented by the Head of the EU Delegation and a small number of EU Ambassadors with an interest. Much of the focus of negotiations in the UNGA rests on finding common ground with developing countries represented in the coalition of the G77 and China, a coalition of 134 developing countries that holds nearly 70% of the votes in the UNGA. The G77 is big and diverse in terms of range of countries, regions and interest they reflect; yet their ability to corral all of their members on policy positions that oftentimes even work against the interests of a significant portion of their membership has been described as fearsome.<sup>51</sup> Diplomats also admitted that it was complicated to undo the solidarity within the G77 and China no matter how effective EU diplomats are in formulating convincing arguments, even in cases where the EU leveraged all like-minded countries.<sup>52</sup> Many G77 and China members believe that eventually they will need the political heft that the group brings on the table, so they accept positions they do not necessarily agree with to build good

will for situations when their interests need to be looked after.<sup>53</sup> Nonetheless, formal outreach sessions are productive and should be continued. In March 2020, the European Commission and the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy outlined in a Joint Communication to the EU Parliament and the Council proposals for a new strategy with Africa aimed at intensifying the cooperation with the continent, which was meant to be a basis for discussion at the postponed European Union–African Union Summit that was scheduled in October 2020. With the objective by the EU to bring the EU-Africa partnership to a new strategic level in the forthcoming months, an important focus for the coming years should be the African Union.

We recommend that the EU Delegation increase the frequency of meetings with the African Union to once a quarter with the goal of deepening collaboration in New York by identifying practical areas for joint working.

The EU Delegation also regularly hosts non-EU European countries, EU candidate countries and EU Economic Partnership Agreements countries, who frequently align with EU statements to share information and to maintain close relations. EU Member States join these meetings on a voluntary basis, along with the Briefer of the Month on the Security Council. The EU Ambassadors and individual Member State Ambassadors regularly hold bilateral meetings, coffees, lunches and breakfasts in different configurations. Maintaining deep relationships with all 193 countries represented in the UNGA is a challenge for even the biggest delegations. There is agreement among European diplomats that there is untapped potential when it comes to outreach to other UN Member States. Here, the EU could serve as a bridge-builder on the global and interregional level. An interviewee argued that 'if the European Union would become known, seen and heard as a collective of UN member states that are here to listen to the concerns of others, to look how we solve these issues together, this would count a lot in the UNGA.'<sup>54</sup>

EU Permanent Representatives interviewed all supported greater outreach and emphasized issues to take in consideration when devising an outreach strategy for the EU in New York:

- The 'collective nature of multilateralism' makes it necessary for negotiators to identify 'others with similar interests, perspectives and orientations.'<sup>55</sup> This can be seen from a plethora of groups of various combinations in the multilateral landscape. These groupings vary between settings. The G77 is an important voice in the UNGA, but less so other bodies like the Security Council or the UNICEF Executive Board. There are also various subregional groups, which are sometimes more accessible than their 'parent groups.' Tactics to navigate the difficult waters of UN group politics could include: adopting 'a bottom up' approach by engaging subregional and smaller groupings with interests similar to the EU positions;<sup>56</sup> focusing outreach activities to those UN Member States identified as influencers in their respective groups or sub-groupings (although, as influencers change over time, it should not be rigid); and capitalizing the EU's own subregional and small diplomatic groupings like the Nordics and Visegrád Group as catalysts for advancing EU policy as way to 'undercut the resistance that you often see developing in large groups such as the G77 and China.'<sup>57</sup>

- A strategic mapping exercise could determine which EU Member State should lead on different external relationships. These relationships would need to be nurtured in the long run and linked to matters of shared interests and mutual concerns, e.g., Small Island Developing States and climate change. This 'twinning' exercise has to be done strategically and should not be based merely on the personal chemistry between the Permanent Representatives or language skills.<sup>58</sup> There is a natural specialization among EU member countries on certain topics, which should be mapped out leveraging their individual competencies.<sup>59</sup>
- Outreach should start in the early phases before the actual intergovernmental negotiation commence to explore commonalities and explain each other's views.<sup>60</sup> Once a group has reached an agreement among its members, it becomes difficult to disentangle positions.
- Due to diplomatic traditions and cultural factors, many Member States, in particular from Asia and Africa, are only ready to consider proposals and to hear different voices, when they come from the ambassadorial level.<sup>61</sup>
- The EU should build trust by ensuring there is an understanding of how it is perceived among other states and how it is being portrayed by others. The EU position is, at times, misunderstood or misrepresented. As one diplomat phrased it: 'You might have the most rational and best articulated position of all, but if you are not able to communicate it well and explain the fundamental reasons for your thinking, you will not come far.'<sup>62</sup>
- The EU should position itself as a 'force of common sense' which would require it to engage with the wider membership. Special attention should be given to hardliners, who should either be isolated, when possible, or being engaged in the process similar to the case of the Paris Agreement, where a particularly inflexible negotiator from Venezuela was tasked with the drafting the preamble contributing to the successful outcome of the negotiations.
- Engagement should be pursued in a way 'to recognize the priorities of the others without imposing one's own objectives;' own interests should be 'pursued in a way that it doesn't negate the other's interests.'<sup>63</sup> European diplomats should refrain in preaching self-perceived values, which can convey a form of moral superiority. A lot comes also down to the personal attitude of European negotiators towards their counterparts from the Global South, which should be on a level of mutual respect.<sup>64</sup>

We recommend that the EU and its Member States explore new avenues how to conduct outreach. We recommend that EU HoMs should also consider how the power of the 28 (27 plus EU) Permanent Representatives in New York could be better deployed as a collective by dividing responsibility between ambassadors for building deep relationships with specific counterparts. This should take account of existing relationships and not preclude any Permanent Representative from establishing a working relationship or meeting with any other Permanent Representative.

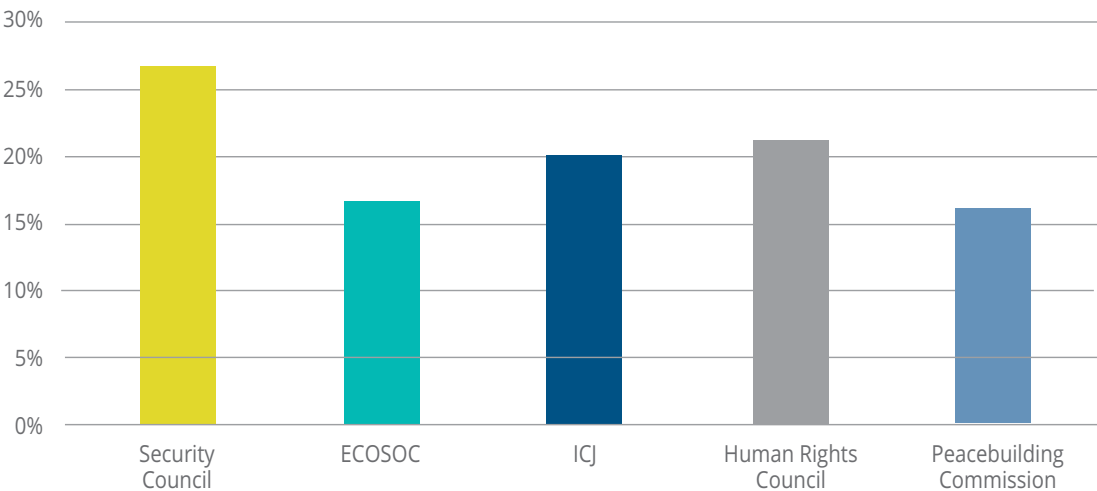


## United Nations General Assembly Elections

The UNGA holds approximately a dozen elections of Member States for roles and positions and roles for which EU countries compete in their own right or by putting forward individual experts. The body elects the non-permanent members of the Security Council, the members of ECOSOC and, jointly with the Security Council, the members of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). The UNGA also elects the members of its own subsidiary bodies such as the Human Rights Council. In addition, the UNGA holds elections for membership of important technical bodies such as the ACABQ, the Committee on Contributions, and the Independent Audit Advisory Committee.

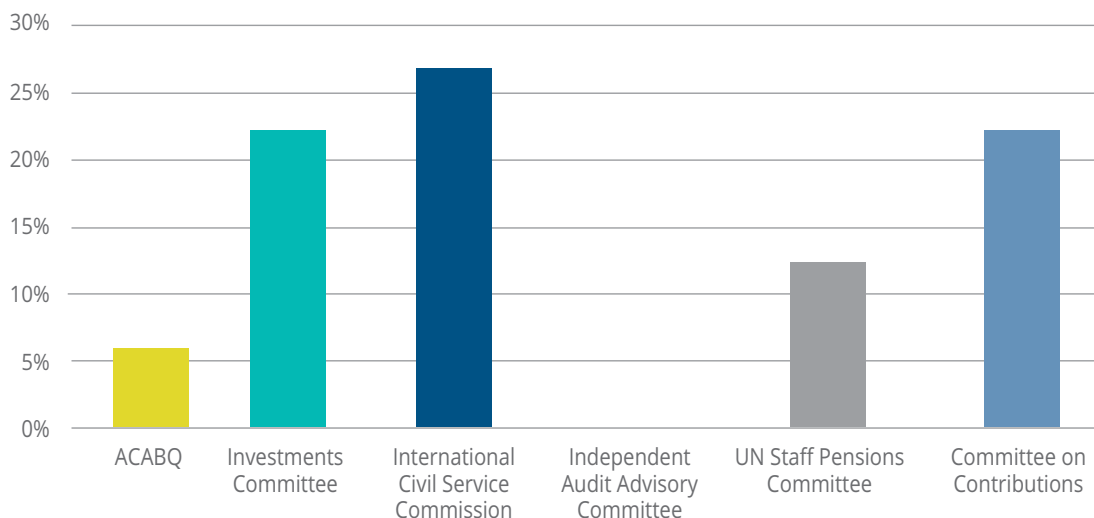
**Chart 3 Representation of EU Member States in UN Entities with elections held in New York, 2020.**

### Selected UN Entities with elections held in New York City



Source: [www.UN.org](http://www.UN.org).

As Chart 3 shows, the EU is currently reasonably well represented in most high-profile bodies, including the Security Council although the situation varies when looking at the most important budget committees. The EU is not well represented in important bodies such as the ACABQ or the Independent Audit Advisory Committee (see Chart 4). This is particularly worrying given the size of EU Member State contributions to both UN assessed and voluntary budgets.

**Chart 4 Representation of EU Member States in UN Budget Bodies in New York, 2020.****EU Membership of Budget Bodies**

Source: EU Delegation to the UN in New York.

We recommend that EU Member States should increase coordination of elections to UN expert bodies and should aim to establish a roster of potential candidates for elections initially focused on budget related bodies.

## United Nations General Assembly Processes/Co-facilitating

Another way for EU Ambassadors to demonstrate impact in the UNGA is by taking on responsibility for chairing one of the six main committees or co-facilitating negotiations on behalf of the President of the UN General Assembly (PGA). The Chairmanship of the six main committees is decided on a rotational basis amongst the five regional groups. EU Member State Permanent Representatives take a disproportionate role in chairing the main committees. For the Seventy-Fourth Session of the UNGA, EU Permanent Representatives chaired the Third and the Fifth Committees. Similarly, for the Seventy-Fifth Session of the UNGA, EU Permanent Representatives are chairing the First and Third Committees.

In the same manner, EU Permanent Representatives are regularly selected by the PGA to facilitate important negotiations in the UNGA. In the Seventy-Third Session of the General Assembly, 42% of the facilitators/co-facilitators selected by the PGA were from the EU. In the Seventy-Fourth Session of

the UNGA, 30% of the facilitators/co-facilitators were from the EU. This is notable as the 27 EU Member States only represent 14% of the 193 Member States in the UNGA as previously mentioned. In recent years, 'the practice has evolved into a more entrepreneurial version of chairing,' which 'involves actively engaging in the negotiation process to foster consensus among different political groups engaged in negotiations'<sup>65</sup> and even propose entire paragraphs in outcome documents as a compromise. This therefore represents an important vehicle for influence that the EU should look to maintain. It is not clear though how closely the negotiations EU Ambassadors co-facilitate align with EU priorities.

We recommend that before each UNGA, EU HoMs should identify which facilitated negotiations are a priority for the EU, engage with the PGA early and encourage him/her to appoint co-facilitators from an EU Member State for these negotiations, while utilizing the wide-ranging European expertise.

# The European Union and the United Nations Security Council

The United Nations Security Council is regarded as the most important UN institution because it has responsibility for issues of peace and war. Unlike the General Assembly, where, for example, the EU has an enhanced observer status, no regional organization has a formal status at the Security Council and it is exclusively composed of UN Member States: the ten elected members ('E10') and the five permanent members ('P5').<sup>66</sup> The EU treaties 'acknowledge the specificity of the UNSC' and are 'respectful of the role' of France as permanent member.<sup>67</sup>

Even with the departure of the United Kingdom from the EU, EU Member States will in most years be well represented on the Security Council. In addition to France's permanent seat, it is possible for up to four non-permanent seats to be occupied by EU countries across three different UN regional groupings: up to two from Western European and Other States Group (WEOG), one from the Eastern European States Group (EEG) and one from the Asia-Pacific Group.<sup>68</sup> The EU currently has three countries occupying elected seats on the Security Council: Belgium, Estonia and Germany. In January 2021, the EU will have two countries, Estonia and Ireland, occupying elected seats.

## From Amsterdam to Lisbon Treaties

The adoption of the Amsterdam Treaty in 1997 introduced specific provisions which required EU countries that are also members of the Security Council to consult and keep the other EU Member States fully informed. It also required EU P5 members to ensure the defense of the positions and the interests of the EU while retaining their national prerogatives provided by the United Nations Charter. This led to the institutionalization, by 2001,<sup>69</sup> of weekly meetings of EU Ambassadors to share information on the discussions in the Security Council and coordination amongst EU Political Counsellors. This has been supplemented over time by monthly gatherings of EU Ambassadors and political coordinators of EU Member States represented on the Council. This coordination was initially chaired by the rotating Presidency but post-Lisbon they have been led by the EU Delegation. Together these measures have meant that EU countries on the Security Council have remained broadly aligned.

The Lisbon Treaty led to a change in how the EU operates on Security Council matters, which is enshrined in Article 34 TEU. The provisions in previous treaties to 'concert and keep other Member States fully informed' was changed to a requirement to 'concert and keep other Member States and the High Representative fully informed' and requires Member States on the Council to 'request the High Representative be invited to present the Unions position' when 'the Union has defined a position on a subject which is on the United Nations Security Council agenda.'<sup>70</sup> But cooperation among the

entire EU membership was limited to information sharing as the 'EU Security Council members are only called upon to concert *among themselves*; there is no reference to concertation with the rest of the EU membership, the High Representative or other EU actors.'<sup>71</sup>

At a practical level, the Lisbon Treaty has meant the EU Delegation in New York has taken on the role of chairing the weekly ambassador level coordination meetings and the expert level coordination. This development has been broadly positive. The continuity and the expertise provided by the EU Delegation has meant that discussions have become more substantive and meaningful.<sup>72</sup>



*Olof Skoog (right), Head of Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, addresses the Security Council meeting on the situation in the Central African Republic.*

## European Union Coordination in the United Nations Security Council

The fact that the EU is unusually well represented in the Security Council 'does not automatically translate into cohesion or influence of EU member states within this institution,' and some academic researchers have concluded that 'cohesion of EU member states within the Security Council' is 'something yet to come.' The specific nature of the Council also explains why the TEU is 'less demanding in relation to the coordination among EU member states within this forum.'<sup>73</sup> Notwithstanding these limitations, at a practical level the level of coordination and cohesion is deep.

EU coordination in the Security Council is now enacted on three different levels. First, there are weekly meetings of the EU political coordinators on Fridays. These meetings are specifically mandated in Article 34 TEU and are chaired by the Political Coordinator of the EU Delegation, which also serves as the host. A particular focus of the discussions are the outcomes of closed meetings that are not accessible to those EU Member States without a seat in the Security Council and the upcoming 'products' that are under negotiation.

Second, every Tuesday the EU Delegation convenes the HoMs meetings comprised of the Permanent Representatives of all EU Member States. Since 2016, an important role has been ascribed to the aforementioned Briefer of the Month, which is one designated EU Member State with a permanent



or non-permanent seat on the Security Council that has the primary responsibility to brief those without membership on Security Council developments. Ahead of time, the Permanent Representatives are briefed by their respective political coordinators and receive a two-page document summarizing key developments of the previous and the upcoming week known as a 'HoMs Fiche', a practice started by Spain in 2014-15. This additional level of preparation has allowed Permanent Representatives to increasingly focus the discussions on the political aspects of negotiations.

Thirdly, there are numerous expert level meetings on specific thematic matters as well as ad-hoc debriefings immediately after closed Security Council meetings convened by the Briefer of the Month,<sup>74</sup> which are seen as particularly helpful. Increasingly, EU Security Council members keep their colleagues informed using group discussions through the software tool 'WhatsApp.'

In 2019, the Europeans introduced a new staff position of an EU Liaison Officer, responsible to ensure 'a smooth and continuous flow of information' among the EU Member States and the EEAS in New York and Brussels and 'to institutionalize the cooperation better than before.'<sup>75</sup> The Liaison Officer supports Briefer of the Month and the EU Political Coordinator, including the drafting of the HoMs Fiche. As only diplomats accredited by Member States with a seat on the Security Council have the right to access and partake in closed sessions of this UN organ, the new Liaison Officer is at the same time accredited by the German Permanent Mission, in order to participate in closed sessions; in this function he provides a vital institutional link to the EEAS. At the time of publishing this paper, it was still not decided if the Irish Permanent Mission to the UN would take over this position or if this role would need to go back to the EU Political Coordinator, who lacks access to closed meetings. Some felt that to reduce duplication the liaison officer could helpfully be tasked with providing written updates of closed Security Council meetings.<sup>76</sup> This could form the basis of communications back to EU capitals ensuring a consistency of understanding.

**We recommend that the EU Delegation and Member States continue the position of EU Liaison Officer.**

Many EU Member State diplomats noted that, over the last few years, significant improvements have been achieved in information sharing and cohesion in the Security Council. There has been a sea change in recent years in respect of the openness of discussions in the EU because of the emergence of a new generation of pro-European diplomats and the establishment of more effective mechanisms of cooperation.<sup>77</sup> While on the whole EU elected members<sup>78</sup> were more open many noted that EU permanent members had become considerably more open as well. Other diplomats noted that 'knowledge about what is happening in the Council is at times (..) unevenly spread among Security Council members themselves' in particular at the decisive early stages of negotiations leading to situations where the Briefer of the Month does not have a full picture. Formal sharing of texts only takes place when negotiated texts are in their final pre-adoption form.<sup>79</sup> A diplomat noted that reticence to

share documents even among EU colleagues stemmed from genuine concerns about the risk of sensitive documents becoming public thus creating friction amongst Security Council members.<sup>80</sup>

While the HoMs meetings were on the whole seen as very useful, one permanent representative remarked that the discussions were often not strategic with '75 to 80 % of the time spent on the dynamics in the Security Council in the preceding and the upcoming week.' This meant that it was not always feasible to 'deploy the collective outreach capacity of the EU' to nudge non-EU partners in the direction of the EU position.<sup>81</sup> On issues of peace and security some felt, the EU was at times too passive when for example compared to the UN negotiations in Geneva.<sup>82</sup>

We recommend that the EU HoMs engage in a medium-term forecasting exercise every three months to identify challenges in the upcoming negotiations and to discuss the strategic directions. Over time the EEAS should adopt a more proactive approach in respect of specific issues and proposals for resolution language.

## European Union Neighborhood Outreach

Information sharing and collaboration is not limited to EU members of the Security Council. Much of the EU's outreach work to other Member States focuses on the Security Council. This outreach will become even more important as the composition of the Security Council changes in the next two years with Norway and Albania occupying elected seats currently occupied by EU Member States. Regular, dedicated collaboration with non-EU European partners will be crucial to delivering EU priorities in the Security Council. The majority of this collaboration will take place naturally between EU members of the Security Council and their non-EU European counterparts, but a more formal process involving all EU Member States could help deepen collaboration.

We recommend that the EU Delegation moves to organizing monthly meetings on Security Council matters with EU Ambassadors and Ambassadors from European Free Trade Association (EFTA) countries, candidate countries and the United Kingdom.

## European Union Visibility

The EU delegation has taken on the role of speaking on behalf of the European Union in the Security Council when possible. There are monthly discussions among political coordinators on where a 'common messaging' is most conducive. The EU aims to speak on issues where it is an important actor, such as the Sahel region, African Union cooperation and Libya. The EU gave statement in the Security Council on average 32 times a year between 2016-19.<sup>83</sup>

EU Member States on the Security Council have also increasingly collaborated in recent years as a further manifestation of Article 34(2)(2) TEU, which requires EU Member States on the Security Council to 'concert.' In addition to the day-to-day discussions between experts and regular coordination meetings, there have been examples of more creative approaches to collaboration.

In 2018, the EU members of the Security Council started the practice of a joint appearance during press stakeouts (after Security Council meetings) and stake-ins (before Council meetings), where the Briefer of the Month would read out a common statement and the others would participate. In addition to the current EU members on the Security Council, they also include the former members that left the Security Council at the end of the previous cycle until new EU Security Council members are elected. For example, in 2020, Poland, which had left the Council on 31 December 2019, was a member of the stakeouts until 17 June 2020, when newly elected Ireland joined the format as incoming member. The press stakeouts are targeted at the public in Europe and in affected countries.<sup>84</sup> Although some worried the stakeouts/ins 'could add to the impression that EU members are over-represented in the Security Council,' most interviewees felt the stakeouts were a positive development that sent a strong message about the continuity of EU foreign policy. They also help prepare incoming EU Security Council members for their term and increase the profile of the 'EU caucus' in the Security



© UN Photo/Loey Felipe

*Six EU Security Council Member States (Belgium, France, Germany, Poland and the United Kingdom as well Estonia who is an upcoming member in 2020) brief journalists on the situation in Syria and Turkey's military incursion. From left to right: Nicolas De Rivière, Permanent Representative of France; Karen Pierce, Permanent Representative of the United Kingdom; Christoph Heusgen, Permanent Representative of Germany; Joanna Wronecka, Permanent Representative of Poland; Marc Pecsteen de Buytswerve, Permanent Representative of Belgium; and Gert Auväärt, Deputy Permanent Representative of Estonia.*

Council.<sup>85</sup> The Head of the EU Delegation does not participate in these joint press stakeouts/ins and interviewees felt that including the Head of Delegation would have strong symbolic value, even though stakeout/ins are convened at short notice allowing limited time to coordinate a position with the larger EU membership. This may mean the Head of the Delegation is restricted to representing language agreed by the EU27, which does not reflect the most recent developments.<sup>86</sup>

There is an ongoing discussion about whether the stakeouts/ins should primarily be ‘EU’ or ‘European’ with the inclusion of likeminded near neighbors. The inclusion of closely aligned European neighbors on the Security Council such as the United Kingdom, Norway, Albania or Switzerland could be helpful.<sup>87</sup> Most felt the current practice whereby, the statements for the press stakeouts/ins are agreed between the EU members of the Security Council with other European partners able to sign up to the final outcome on a ‘a take it or leave it’ basis struck the right balance.<sup>88</sup>

We recommend that the practice of joint EU press stakeouts/ins should be continued with the Head of the EU Delegation preauthorized to participate where the EU has a common position.

In 2019, with France holding the Security Council Presidency in March, and Germany in April, the two countries organized a joint Presidency covering the two months—coined *Jumelage*—allowing for greater coherence over a two-month period.<sup>89</sup> In 2020, the EU announced the *Printemps Européen* alluding to three consecutive presidencies of EU Member States in the Security Council: Estonia in May, France in June and Germany in July.<sup>90</sup> While interviewees welcomed this development some felt this initiative could be improved with the participating countries involved developing a coherent agenda that showed more interplay between the different months.<sup>91</sup>

We recommend that EU members of the Security Council should look to thematically link debates on issues in their Presidencies building momentum towards Security Council action.

Despite the move towards greater coherence amongst EU Member States on the Security Council, each EU Security Council member speaks in every debate in their national capacity.<sup>92</sup> This contrasts with the recent practice initiated by African members on the Council (‘A3s’) who have initiated a practice of one member speaking on behalf of the others on a rotational basis. More recently, Vietnam and Indonesia, both ASEAN members, joined forces. Diplomats interviewed were split about the effectiveness of this approach with some diplomats interviewed open to the EU moving in this direction while others felt that having multiple EU speakers increased the impact of the EU overall and that joined EU statements were of minor symbolic value.

We recommend that in line with the more flexible approach proposed for the General Assembly, EU members of the Security Council consider speaking with one voice on a limited number—one or two per year—of the Security Council discussions with the Briefer of the Month taking the lead to showcase European unity.

## Elections to the United Nations Security Council

Elections to the Security Council are hotly contested with EU Member States often competing against each other for non-permanent elected seats. This is a particular challenge in the WEOG group which does not apply a rotational system. A number of those interviewed felt that contested Security Council elections wasted significant political capital and scarce resources on intra-EU competition<sup>93</sup> and impacted the ability of new Security Council members to adequately prepare. An extreme example of EU competition was the election held for the two WEOG seats for 2017-18 with Sweden, Italy and Netherlands competing against each other. After a period of intense campaigning, Sweden was successful in securing a seat, but the Netherlands<sup>94</sup> and Italy could not be separated after five rounds of voting leading to the two EU countries agreeing to split the two-year term on the Security Council.

Over the next two years, the EU will go from three elected seats on the Council to just one. A more consistent EU presence in the Security Council could help increase the impact the EU and Member States collectively have. Absent Security Council reform, this could happen by better coordinating which EU Member States run for election to the Security Council with the EU aiming to have at least two Member States elected as Security Council members taking advantage of the EU presence in WEOG, EEG and Asia Pacific Group.<sup>95</sup> Attempts to establish a long-term rotational scheme in WEOG such as that proposed in 2012 by the Permanent Representative of the Netherlands, Herman Schaper, failed to secure agreement and most diplomats felt that short term political considerations in EU capitals mean that agreeing a rotation scheme would remain difficult. The advantages of EU endorsed candidates should not be underestimated. Starting from a base of 27 votes would give EU Member States running against countries from outside the EU a head start. In addition, the EU Delegation could support the campaigns of individual Member States through its presence in over 125 countries across the globe. Collectively directing this network behind EU candidates could have a considerable impact on elections particularly where a Member State has a limited diplomatic network.

We recommend that EU Member States look again at rotational schemes for WEOG and EEG with the aim of ensuring the presence of at least two elected members on the Security Council at all times.

## Preparing for the United Nations Security Council

Elected members joining the Security Council are at a considerable disadvantage when compared to permanent members who over time are able to build up institutional memory.<sup>96</sup> The challenge of having to run contested elections and the two-year term makes it hard for elected members to learn fully the complexities of the job, even though rescheduling of the Security Council elections from October to June in 2016 has given elected members four additional months of preparation.<sup>97</sup> Effective preparation for their time on the Security Council is crucial for elected members. A key part of this is managing the transition from outgoing and incoming members. Over recent years, there has been better transfer of knowledge, experience and political initiatives as well as dedicated handovers on specific dossiers. EU elected members have also in recent years travelled to Brussels to coordinate with the EEAS. Building on this the EU Delegation could intensify work with outgoing and incoming elected members to ensure a smooth transition for the challenges of chairing subsidiary bodies. Together the EU Delegation and elected members could identify EU priorities for chairing and secure the roles with the support of existing EU members of the Security Council. The policy lead for a given negotiation in the EU Delegation, along with the lead for that policy in an incoming and outgoing delegation, could also form a team that meets regularly throughout the preceding year to prepare for the Security Council.

One of the biggest challenges for elected members looking to maximize their impact on the Security Council are its working methods, which the P5 have over time molded to their advantage. An example is the process of ‘pen-holding’<sup>98</sup> for drafting resolutions. Of the 39 country situations and thematic items on the Security Council agenda, the P5 hold the pen for 28 (70%).<sup>99</sup> Elected members have in recent years made inroads into the P5 monopoly on pen-holding. Belgium and Germany, for example, have jointly held the pen for the high-profile Syria humanitarian file. There are no written Security Council rules on assigning pen-holding, which leaves the door open for the elected members to take the initiative—e.g., in the case of the Permanent Representative of New Zealand, who proactively drafted a settlement resolution on Jerusalem and recommended taking inspiration from the Nike logo and ‘Just do it.’<sup>100</sup>

We recommend that the EU develop a forward-looking strategy for EU elected members to take on and retain pen-holding for priority negotiations.

In recent years, EU Member States have increasingly looked to sharing staff and secondments as a means of fostering knowledge transfer. A Dutch diplomat served on the North Korea sanctions committee for three different permanent missions starting with Italy in 2017, followed by the Netherlands in 2018, and finally with Germany in 2019-20. The Deputy Political Coordinator of Germany was deployed to the Permanent Mission of France for a month ahead of its term in the Security Council. Malta and Ireland plan to post diplomats to each other’s Missions during their

upcoming periods on the Council. There are ongoing plans to place EEAS diplomats in the delegations of EU Member States on the Council to help build up multilateral capacity. Loaned staff under these arrangements also bring expertise of EU policy and knowledge of institutions helping to ensure that negotiations in the Security Council take account of EU positions.

One challenge is that the Security Council holds a significant number of closed meetings, which are only accessible to the staff of the permanent missions of members of the Security Council. Unfortunately, the practice of placing foreign nationals in Member State delegations has received push back, even though, from a legal approach, it remains the privilege of the Permanent Representatives to appoint individuals as their mission staff. A creative approach could be pursued in which a diplomat of an EU Member State expected to join the Security Council is initially loaned to the EEAS in Brussels and/or the EU Delegation in New York to work on Security Council issues before joining their country's Security Council delegation.

We recommend that the EU Delegation and interested Member States develop a strategy for maximizing the potential for EEAS staff becoming accredited to Security Council member delegations.



## The European Union and the United Nations Secretariat

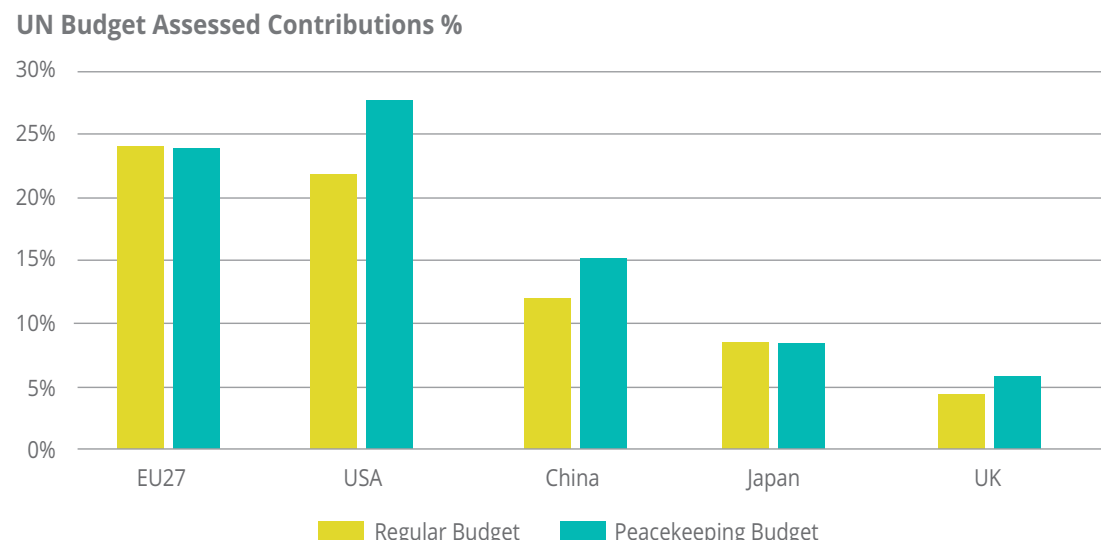
Headed by the UN Secretary-General, the UN Secretariat is the executive arm of the UN, responsible for setting the agenda and delivering the decisions made by the other principal organs of the UN. Secretariat staff play a role in international affairs ranging from mediating peace agreements to setting the agenda for reforms. The EU and its Member States play an important role in supporting and funding the UN Secretariat. They interact with the entire vertical of the Secretariat, from the Secretary-General and down, with the aim of gathering information on and influencing proposals being developed and mandates being implemented. The EU Delegation and Member States all devote considerable time and resources in engaging with the UN Secretariat in both formal and informal settings and this is recognized by the UN Secretariat officials. Senior level interviewees from the UN confirmed that the 'EU has been an outstanding support and enriching partner.'<sup>101</sup>

### The European Union Financial Contribution to the United Nations Secretariat

The EU can claim significant influence as a major funder of the UN Secretariat both in terms of voluntary and assessed contributions. The EU27 collectively fund close to 24% of both the UN's Regular Budget and Peacekeeping Budget. This makes the EU27 the biggest contributor to the UN Regular Budget and second only to the U.S. for Peacekeeping. Since the EU itself is not a Member State of the UN it does not make assessed contributions. All 27 Member States and the EU Delegation are closely involved in issues around UN finance and administration in the Fifth Committee of the General Assembly. Although, as noted earlier, EU Member States are underrepresented in important expert budget bodies such as the ACABQ.



*Olof Skoog (right), new Head of Delegation of the European Union to the United Nations, presents his credentials to Secretary-General António Guterres.*

**Chart 5 UN Budget Assessed Contributions in percent for the year 2018.<sup>102</sup>**

We recommend that the European Commission and the Member States discuss EU extra-budgetary contributions and priority areas for funding.

EU Member States are also the largest source of extra-budgetary contributions to the UN Secretariat. The EU itself is not a major source of extra-budgetary contributions, which help support the Secretary-General by providing flexible funding for his priorities without the need to engage the Fifth Committee. Some interviewees felt that by making voluntary contributions to extra-budgetary trust funds, the European Commission could increase its political leverage.<sup>103</sup> Each EU Member State currently considers extra-budgetary contributions individually and there is scope to collectively identify priorities for the EU.

## European Union Nationals in the United Nations Secretariat

Another way all Member States try to influence the UN Secretariat is by increasing the number of their nationals that are employed by the institution. Appointments to the Secretariat are made on the basis of competence with regard given to geographical distribution. Secretariat staff are international civil servants who serve the goals of the UN rather than their countries origin. Nevertheless, all Member States have recognized the benefits of having their nationals in the UN Secretariat and there is intense competition between Member States to place their nationals in individual positions.<sup>104</sup> The most senior positions at Assistant-Secretary-General level and above are contested intensely with the P5, major contributors and rising powers all pushing their nationals. Because of the education and language standards required EU Member State nationals were well represented in the Secretariat the early years of the UN but this advantage has diminished over time. The EU can rightly be proud of the contribution of its citizens to the UN Secretariat. Three of the UN's nine Secretary-Generals have come from countries that are now in the EU, heading up the organization for 21 of its 75 years.

**Table 1 Representation status of EU Nationals in the UN Secretariat as at 31 December 2018.**

Unrepresented	
Underrepresented	Cyprus, Luxembourg,
Within Range	Croatia, Czechia, Denmark, Estonia, Greece, Hungary, Latvia, Lithuania, Malta, Netherlands, Poland, Romania, Slovakia, Slovenia, Sweden
Overrepresented	Austria, Belgium, Bulgaria, Finland, France, Germany, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Spain

Source: United Nations Secretary-General<sup>105</sup>

The UN Secretariat employs a total of 37,505 staff across the globe. As of 2018, 15.5% (5,824) of UN staff were from EU Member States. The gender balance of EU staff employed by the Secretariat was almost even (2,866 women and 2,958 men). Because a large number of Secretariat staff are employed locally in field missions this is not a full reflection of EU representation in the UN Secretariat but is a useful benchmark. An alternative measure is the sub-category of secretariat staff (3,107) that fall within the scope of desirable ranges which aim to balance universal representation with the financial contribution of Member States. There are no EU Member States unrepresented, and only two underrepresented. EU Member States represented 29% of all staff in this category and 26% at senior levels (D1 and above).

Overall, the EU is well represented in the UN Secretariat in line with its financial contribution to the UN. Nonetheless, it is also the case that EU Member States often have candidates competing against each other. In addition, competition for positions in the UN Secretariat is tougher than ever as emerging countries push to increase the number of their nationals in the Secretariat. With this in mind there is scope for the EU Member States to consolidate their efforts to avoid competing against each other.

Interviewees expressed their frustration about the uncoordinated EU approach to filling high-level positions to the UN Secretariat but the intense competition between Member States for positions at the most senior levels (Under-Secretary-General and Assistant-Secretary-General) makes a more consolidated EU approach at this level difficult.

A better starting point for collaboration could be the Junior Professional Officer (JPO) programme, which aims 'to provide young professionals with the opportunity to gain hands-on experience in the field of multilateral international cooperation through a learning experience.'<sup>106</sup> JPOs are paid by the donor countries that sponsored their recruitment and, in most cases, only nationals of this state are eligible to apply. Currently 13 EU Member States participate in the JPO programme with the UN Secretariat<sup>107</sup> and 11 EU Member States partner with the JPO Service Center of UNDP, which services several UN entities.<sup>108</sup> JPOs usually maintain good relations to their sponsor governments through alumni networks. Citizens of the EU Member States that do not have JPO agreements with the UN are currently almost entirely excluded from this important talent promotion program. A new JPO programme—in addition to the current national programs—administered by EU institutions, which is open for all EU nationals and potentially also for highly underrepresented Least Developed Countries,

We recommend that the European Commission consider the establishment of an EU-wide JPO programme that would complement existing programs. This initiative could be overseen jointly by DG Devco, DG ECHO and the EEAS, depending on the nature of the post, with support by the European Personnel Selection Office.

would offer benefits to all EU Member States and enrich the UN with young talent. JPOs would serve as 'ambassadors' for Europe in UN agencies and could foster cooperation with Brussels.

## Outreach to the United Nations Secretariat

EU Permanent Representatives regularly engage with a range of UN officials from the Secretary-General and down. At a formal level, the EU Delegation invites the UN Secretary-General to a discussion with EU HoMs approximately twice a year including at the annual EU HoMs retreat. Similarly, the Deputy-Secretary-General and other senior UN officials are frequently invited to brief EU HoMs. Senior UN officials including the Under-Secretary-Generals for Peacekeeping and Political Affairs also brief the Political and Security Committee in Brussels on an annual basis. The EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs also regularly meets with senior UN counterparts. There is also frequent contact between different Commissioners and senior UN officials. The Covid-19 crisis has meant that much of the planned face-to-face contact has not taken place in 2020. Some interviewees remained concerned that the UN was not a high a priority for decision-makers in Brussels. They also expressed concern about the nature and opportunities for partnership being misunderstood, noting that there was not enough 'traction and interest for the UN in Brussels'.<sup>109</sup> Many of those interviewed felt it was, therefore, important to redouble efforts to build links at the highest political levels in New York and Brussels by revitalizing the strategic level discussion between the UN Secretary-General and the Presidents of the European Commission and European Council. Most felt that an important first step would be to invite the UN Secretary-General to a meeting of the European Council.

In specific areas the EU has also taken important steps to become a genuine partner to the UN.<sup>110</sup> For example, in the area of peace and security, the EU-UN High-Level Political Dialogue and establishment of the United Nations Liaison Office for Peace and Security (UNLOPS) in Brussels, which brings together different parts of the UN Secretariat to liaise on peace and security, has helped build closer collaboration on aspects ranging from women, peace and security, conflict prevention, and trilateral cooperation with the African Union. The structured approach to collaboration in the area of peace and security could be replicated in other priority areas of work.

We recommend that the EU and UN develop a structured approach to collaboration on Sustainable Development, drawing on some of the established good practice in the area of peace and security.

# The European Union and the United Nations Economic and Social Council

## Status and Representation of the European Union in the United Nations Economic and Social Council

The United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) is a principal organ of the UN with a membership of 54 Member States tasked with coordinating work across the UN on sustainable development. In theory, twenty EU Member States could be represented at one time on ECOSOC: thirteen from WEOG, six from EEG and one from the Asia Group. However, the number is significantly less in most years. Currently, eight EU Member States have seats on ECOSOC. EU Member States do not need to campaign and compete for their membership bids because the EU employs a system which determines the election intervals for EU Member States.<sup>111</sup> Because the UN Charter does not place term-limits on ECOSOC membership,<sup>112</sup> some countries, like Germany, have remained continuous members of ECOSOC. Countries that are not members of ECOSOC are also able to participate in ECOSOC meetings and can even submit proposals.<sup>113</sup> The ECOSOC Rules of Procedure grants intergovernmental organizations with a permanent observer status in the UNGA, such as the EU, the right to 'participate, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Council.'<sup>114</sup>

### ECOSOC Rules of Procedure: Rule 79

#### *Participation of Other Intergovernmental Organizations*

'Representatives of Intergovernmental organizations accorded permanent observer status by the General Assembly and of other intergovernmental organizations designated on an ad hoc or a continuing basis by the Council on the recommendation of the Bureau, may participate, without the right to vote, in the deliberations of the Council on questions within the scope of the activities of the organization.'



This means that the EU Delegation participates in ECOSOC meetings on the same basis as other observers with no recognition of the global role the EU plays on issues on the agenda of ECOSOC. The EU has a weaker status in ECOSOC than in the General Assembly, even though ECOSOC mainly covers issues in which the EU has competence.<sup>115</sup> This anomaly was recognized in the 2012 'Barroso-Ashton Strategy' ('Strategy for the progressive improvement of the EU status in international organizations and other fora in line with the objectives of the Treaty of Lisbon'), which recommended

work to 'examine the political (and legal) feasibility to achieve enhanced rights along the lines of those in UNGA Resolution 65/276' in particular at the ECOSOC.<sup>116</sup> Since the adoption of the strategy no progress appears to have been made on changing the EU status. Most interviewees felt that in practical terms, the existing observer status has not been an obstacle for EU's engagement in the ECOSOC. The EU is widely considered to be a decisive voice in ECOSOC and the main negotiating power alongside the G77.<sup>117</sup> It is often relied upon to help find consensus between the G77 and WEOG countries.<sup>118</sup> The EU Delegation coordinates and negotiates ECOSOC resolutions in the same way as in the General Assembly.<sup>119</sup> The EU Delegation is also allowed to deliver statements after Member States have taken the floor.<sup>120</sup> Some interviewees felt that ECOSOC was not a priority for the EU, reflected by the fact that it was rarely discussed during the weekly HoMs meetings. While the practical implications of enhancing the EU status in ECOSOC would be limited, seeking a change would provide a powerful signal that the EU is committed to the work of ECOSOC.

We recommend that the EU explore options for enhancing its status in ECOSOC.

## High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development

Since 2016, an increasingly important component of ECOSOC's work is the High-Level Political Forum on Sustainable Development (HLPF). HLPF meets annually under the auspices of ECOSOC and every four years as a summit under the auspices of the General Assembly. For the ECOSOC sessions, the EU maintains a 'full participant' status that can be traced back to the Rio Conference of 1992, which also grants the EU the right to speak, the right of reply, and the right to introduce proposals and amendments that have to be voted on.<sup>121</sup> The EU Delegation leads the negotiations on the HLPF ministerial declaration on behalf of the EU. The HLPF considers Member State voluntary national reviews (VNRs) to facilitate sharing of experiences, including successes, challenges and lessons learned, and provide political leadership, guidance and recommendations for follow-up.<sup>122</sup> The EU has prepared an informal VNR which it has presented informally to a HLPF side event.<sup>123</sup> While there have to date only been cases of Member States presenting a formal VNR during the HLPF, the resolution establishing the HLPF<sup>124</sup> does not place any barriers to regional entities doing so.

A formal presentation of an EU VNR would be an important signal of the EU's ongoing commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals; we recommend that the EU Delegation explore options for presenting an EU wide VNR in the next HLPF.



There was consensus amongst those interviewed on the need for the EU to be more strategic in its approach to all entities across the UN that play a role in delivering the Sustainable Development Goals. Many of those interviewed commended the efforts by the EU Delegation to take a more strategic approach to engagement and to better prioritize through, for example, the HoMs retreats. Interviewees felt there was scope to build on this noting that 'part of being successful at the UN is about anticipating where the next challenges are going to be;' otherwise you are constantly forced into a defensive position.<sup>125</sup> The HoMs retreat helps set the agenda for HoMs meetings. Some interviewees also noted that the focus of the weekly HoMs meetings were overly centered on the Security Council.<sup>126</sup> One interviewee felt that there was scope to engage in strategic discussions about developments in the ECOSOC, the Second Committee and the Executive Boards of the UN Funds and Programmes.<sup>127</sup> This could be done through a strategic discussion at the HoMs level before the beginning of the developmental cycle in the UN aimed at setting direction for detailed discussions at expert level.<sup>128</sup>

We recommend the EU building on the HoMs retreat and hold a dedicated strategic level discussion on development to identify priorities and challenges on the horizon in the General Assembly, ECOSOC and Executive Boards of the UN Funds and Programmes.



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*A view of a table for conference officers with paraphernalia in the Security Council chamber ahead of the Security Council meeting on the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The Security Council unanimously adopted resolution 2496 (2019) authorizing the EU to maintain a multinational stabilization force in Bosnia and Herzegovina.*



# The European Union and the United Nations Funds and Programmes

New York is also home to three large UN Funds and Programmes: UNDP, UNICEF and UNFPA as well as UN Women, which, while not strictly a Fund or Programme, is set up with many of the same features. UN Funds and Programmes have their senior leadership appointed by the UN Secretary-General but operate as independent entities with their own oversight boards and independent funding. EU Member States play a major part in their leadership, direction and financing.

## Oversight of the United Nations Funds and Programmes

The Executive Board, which serves both UNDP and UNFPA, consists of 36 Member States that serve on a rotating basis and is responsible for setting the direction and monitoring the performance of the Programme. In 2020, eight EU Member States were on the Board: From WEOG Austria, Denmark, Finland, Italy, Sweden and the Netherlands; from EEG Bulgaria and Czech Republic. Similarly, UNICEF has an Executive Board of 36 Member States including seven EU Member States: From WEOG Denmark, Ireland, Germany, Spain and Sweden, from EEG Estonia and Lithuania. Membership of the Executive Boards is determined by a vote in ECOSOC and is restricted to UN Member States. Estonia, Lithuania. WEOG countries agreed on a rotation scheme determining membership in the Boards.<sup>129</sup> The EU has permanent observer status in the Executive Boards mirroring the status in ECOSOC with strong limitations compared to the enhanced observer status in the UNGA. As in the General Assembly, observer status does not include the right to vote in the Executive Boards but, as decisions are taken by consensus in the Executive Boards, this has limited practical impact.<sup>130</sup> The main drawback is that as an observer, the EU can only deliver a statement after the Members States, including those not on the Board, have spoken, which 'has an effect on the immediacy of the intervention.'<sup>131</sup>

In the 2020 Executive Board meetings, the EU took the floor to identify itself 'as a donor.'<sup>132</sup> While there is no formal status for major donors in the Boards, this could be used as the first step towards acquiring greater recognition, acknowledging the financial contributions made. The World Food Programme (WFP) Executive Board has granted the European Community (and subsequently the EU) enhanced status since 1996 allowing it to speak immediately after WFP Board members and ahead of other UN Member States, which are 'member state observers' to the Board.<sup>133</sup>

EU Member States have historically deemed the Executive Boards in New York as 'exclusive Member State territory'<sup>134</sup> (sometimes referred to *chasse gardée*) and have shown unwillingness to coordinate their positions within the EU.<sup>135</sup> EU cooperation in the UN Funds and Programmes is largely limited to information sharing.<sup>136</sup> There have in recent years been increasing calls for greater EU coordina-

We recommend that building on the example of the WFP Executive Board, the EU develop a roadmap for acquiring additional speaking rights in recognition of its position as the most important non-Member State donor.

tion,<sup>137</sup> particularly in situations where other members of the Board have loudly pushed for positions at odds with longstanding EU positions—such as the recent demands to limit programming on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR).

An obstacle that limits greater coordination is the vast difference in financial contributions between EU Member States. Germany, the Netherlands and Sweden are amongst the biggest donors while other Member States contribute very little to the Funds and Programmes. The big donors understandably want to maintain their existing role and status given the need to justify their contribution to their parliaments and citizens. One diplomat compared the position of the big contributors as analogous to France's approach to the Security Council – 'they do not want to contradict the EU but want to retain a room of maneuver.'<sup>138</sup> There are understandable concerns that a move towards a common EU position would dilute messages on topics such as migration where differences exist within the EU.<sup>139</sup> There is nonetheless widespread recognition amongst those interviewed that a more cohesive approach by the EU would increase impact and help deliver shared EU goals. Two big donor interviewees concluded that a 'very narrow institutional angle'<sup>140</sup> is counterproductive and that a 'more flexible interpretation of what the European Union is would potentially increase the collective EU impact.'<sup>141</sup> An effective EU approach would require a more strategic discussion at an early stage among EU Member States to identify emerging priorities and for them to 'agree on a division of labor on a strategic outreach and mapping the concerns of other members of the Board or groupings of the UN.'<sup>142</sup> Any change would need to be done carefully bearing in mind that the Boards have largely been kept free of the politicization prevalent in other parts of the UN.

In the new next programming cycle, the EU Commission plans to adopt the 'Team Europe' approach to its work in country, drawing on the approach taken during the EU response to COVID-19. This would mean that the EU27 and the Commission would aim to move towards joint programming focusing on two to three priority areas, where they collectively can have a tangible impact. The UN Funds and Programmes could be important partners for the 'Team Europe' approach. In-country coordination should be accompanied by greater coordination between the Commission and EU Member States in the Boards of the Funds and Programmes, to ensure a consistent approach is taken in New York and on the country level.

We recommend that ahead of Executive Board sessions EU Member States move from information sharing to light-touch coordination in New York to complement the 'Team Europe' approach, under which the EU27 and the European Commission have moved towards joint programming on the ground.

### Executive Direction

Member States often look to the nationality of senior leadership in the Funds and Programmes as an indication of influence. The Executive Directors of UNDP, UNICEF, UNFPA and UN Women are appointed by the UN Secretary-General in consultation with the respective Executive Boards. UNICEF has had seven Executive Directors since its inception, and all have been from the U.S. UNICEF currently has four Deputy Executive Directors, one of whom is from the EU. The UNDP Administrator is currently a German national. Of the nine past Executive Directors none have been from Member States currently in the EU. As well as the Administrator, the UNDP senior leadership team is made up of nine Assistant Administrators, one of whom is an EU National. UNFPA is currently headed by a Panamanian national. All five Executive Directors of UNFPA since its inception have been from developing countries. UNFPA has recently appointed a Danish national to fill one of its two Deputy Executive Director positions.

The Executive Director of UN Women is from South Africa. One of the two Deputy Executive Directors is from an EU Member State. No EU country has managed to secure the kind of stranglehold the U.S. has maintained at the head of UNICEF. The proportion of EU nationals at senior levels in the Funds and Programmes is significantly less than the EU's financial contribution. This is understandable as it is also important that the senior levels of Funds and Programmes include officials from donor and recipient countries. As such, the EU's current level of representation at senior levels in the Funds and Programmes looks reasonable.

**Table 2 EU Nationals in Senior Positions among the New York based UN Funds and Programmes, 2020.**

	Senior Leadership (Assistant-Secretary-General or above)	EU Nationals
UNDP	10	2
UNICEF	5	1
UNFPA	3	1
UN Women	3	1
Total	21	5

Source: Own research based on the official websites of the UN agencies.

We recommend that the EU continue to monitor the composition and balance of senior positions in the UN Funds and Programmes.

Relations between senior executives in the Funds and Programmes and the EU are, on the whole, strong although some interviewees felt that the relationship lacked strategic depth and that the EU's 'technocratic approach' at times reduced the role of UN Funds and Programmes to simply an 'implementing organization' of EU projects. The EU could potentially do more to capitalize on the policy capacity, presence on the ground and the trust bestowed upon the UN to advance EU priorities in countries.<sup>143</sup> While senior level backing in New York is important in this regard, the key to success would be greater collaboration and relationship building in-country.

We recommend that the EU considers steps to incentivize their representations in developing countries to establish strategic partnerships with the UN Resident Coordinator on the ground to ensure EU and UN priorities are closely aligned.

## Funding the United Nations Funds and Programmes

EU Member States are amongst the biggest contributors to the UN Funds and Programmes. In addition to EU Member States, the EU itself, through the European Commission, is by far the biggest non-Member State contributor. In 2018, the three New York-based Funds and Programmes received a total of USD 771 million from the European Commission.

In 2018, the European Commission, the European Investment Bank and 18 EU Member States made contributions to UNDP totaling USD 1.27 billion or 24% of UNDPs budget.<sup>144</sup> Contributions ranged from USD 402 million from Germany to USD 57,000 from Romania. The European Commission contributed USD 325 million. However, it is important to note that this underestimates the scale of the contribution by the EU and its Member States as a significant share of UNDPs budget comes from other multilateral sources, to which they are also significant contributors, such as the Global Environment Facility<sup>145</sup> and the Global Fund to fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria.<sup>146</sup> Taking these contributions into account, the EU and its Member States directly and indirectly provided 36% of the funding of UNDP in 2018. This considerably exceeds the share of other big contributors such as the U.S. (8%), Japan (9%) and the United Kingdom (7%).<sup>147</sup>

Twenty-four EU Member State Governments contributed USD 1.36 billion to UNICEF in 2018 representing 36% of all direct Government contributions.<sup>148</sup> In addition to this the European Commission contributed USD 369 million, making it the fourth largest contributor to UNICEF. Within the European Commission, UNICEF has built up partnerships with various bodies, including the Directorate-General

for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations (DG ECHO) which is UNICEF's single largest partner for interventions related to nutrition and education in emergencies. Taking account of EU contributions that flow to UNICEF through multilateral entities such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance,<sup>149</sup> and the Global Partnership for Education,<sup>150</sup> the EU and its Member States collectively contribute 40% of UNICEF's budget. This is significantly more than the U.S. (18%), the United Kingdom (14%) and Japan (4.5%).

Nineteen EU Member States contributed USD 383 million to UNFPA in 2018. The European Commission contributed a further USD 64 million. Together this represents 36% of UNFPA's funding. Taking account of EU funds that flow to UNFPA through other UN entities, the EU is the source of 41% of UNFPA's funding. Importantly EU funding is often directed towards much sought after core funding with EU Member States contributing 60% of UNFPA's core funding.<sup>151</sup>

Twenty EU Member States and the European Commission contributed a total of USD 143 million to UN Women in 2018 representing 47% of the organizations funding.<sup>152</sup> This does not include funding for the Spotlight Initiative to which the European Commission has committed EUR 500 million (USD 605 million) with the aim of working in partnership with the UN, to eliminate all forms of violence against women and girls in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, Latin America, and the Pacific.

The New York-based Funds and Programmes are heavily reliant on the EU for funding. While the EU is recognized across the UN System as a major contributor, the scale of dependence of the New York-based Funds and Programmes on the EU and EU Member States for funding is not always appreciated and the EU should do more to ensure its contribution is recognized.<sup>153</sup> 'No attempts are made by the EU to calculate what EU member states together with the Commission contribute. We are constantly underrepresenting ourselves,' one diplomat noted.<sup>154</sup>

Another potential approach is to build on the 'Team Europe' approach and apply it to other areas of programming. The EU could identify 'Team Europe' initiatives at the country level, where the EU and Member States representation could come together, pool resources and make substantial change around an issue like green economy in partnership with the UN. Over time this could lead to a shift towards a more strategic and country focused engagement with the UN.

While the funds provided by the EU are appreciated across the UN System, those interviewed emphasized the need for 'faster, nimbler and more agile funding mechanisms.'<sup>155</sup> There are examples of good practices, such as the aforementioned 'Spotlight Initiative to eliminate violence against women and girls.' Spotlight is seen as having been designed in a way to create coherence by creating strong incentives for interagency collaborations, making it a requirement to access resources.<sup>156</sup> EU instruments

**We recommend that the EU and its Member States continue to prioritize funding for the Funds and Programmes but also regularly calculate and communicate the total flow of funds from the EU and EU Member States.**

are seen as usually highly bureaucratic, with complex reporting obligations compared to other donors.<sup>157</sup> This leads to lost opportunities because UN officials take the attitude that it is 'better not to try unless you are really prepared to go through a very long and heavy process.'<sup>158</sup> The pre-programming and negotiating phases of working with the EU are felt to take away capacity needed for implementation on the ground.<sup>159</sup> The EU has long acknowledged the importance of providing core, as well as earmarked, funding to the UN Funds and Programmes. Academic researchers have revealed the detrimental effects of earmarking on multilateral institutions and the challenges earmarked funding poses to donors, which also 'risks instrumentalising mission-based multilateral organisations for project-implementation purposes.'<sup>160</sup> Others also suggested that 'the use of tightly earmarked contributions in particular fosters fragmentation and competition between UN agencies, and has consequences for the coherence and the pursuit of common results.'<sup>161</sup> UN Member States collectively committed to 'bringing core resources to a level of at least 30 per cent in the next five years'<sup>162</sup> as part of a Funding Compact jointly adopted by UNGA and ECOSOC. It is therefore notable that while the European Commission is the largest non-Member State contributor to the Funds and Programmes, unlike EU Member States, it has to date shied away from providing core funding. The EU's current funding modalities do not envisage the disbursement of voluntary core funding to UN agencies, even though legal frameworks appear to exist to go into this direction. There are arguments both for and against the EU providing core funding to the UN, which could be viewed as simply as passing on funds to the UN that could come directly from Member States. On the other hand, core funding is crucial to the operations of the Funds and Programmes and shown to be effective. Providing core funding, particularly when a Fund or Programme like UNFPA is under attack, could provide a very powerful signal. It would also show that the EU is not only a donor but a strategic development partner of the UN System.



*On 23 September 2020, the EU hosted a #Backpack2School installation by UNICEF 'Sending out an SOS' in the heart of the European Quarters in Brussels as part of a global public initiative on education around the world.*

We recommend that the European Commission revisits the scope for providing EU core and thematic funding to the Funds and Programmes in light of the commitments Member States made in the UN Funding Compact.



## Conclusion

Over a period of 50 years the EU has progressively gained status and increased its effectiveness in the UN. It has become a strong voice and a node of influence across the UN System. Because the UN remains primarily an organization centered around Member States, there are limitations on how the EU can operate and engage in the UN; this cannot be changed by the EEAS or EU Member States acting alone. While the EU has become more effective over the last five decades, the challenges it faces have been laid bare in recent years. The time is right for the EU to closely examine how it operates in the UN in New York. We have identified a number of practical steps which we believe will improve the EU's impact in the UNGA, UN Security Council, ECOSOC, UN Funds and Programmes and with the UN Secretariat. We would hope that EU HoMs in New York collectively consider these recommendations and identify those that can be implemented immediately and those that require further deliberation.



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*The Berlaymont building in Brussels, which houses the headquarters of the European Commission, was illuminated in blue to celebrate the 75th anniversary of the United Nations on 24 October 2020.*



## Summary of Recommendations for EU Interaction with UN Institutions

### United Nations General Assembly

- We recommend that the EU move to an arrangement in which EU interventions in the General Assembly on certain topics are reinforced by interventions in line with the agreed EU position from EU Member States speaking in their national capacity. On issues such as human rights, for example, it would be advantageous to have EU Member States speaking in support of the EU statement to counter possible perceptions that the EU position does not have widespread support, as well as directly address (and 'fact-check') statements given by other countries.
- We recommend that EU HoMs discuss how to increase impact by giving its negotiators more room for maneuver by agreeing on an overall policy line and allowing the EU Delegation/negotiators flexibility on the detailed wording of statements.
- We recommend that the EEAS and EU Member States consider how they could enhance their collective diplomatic skills base. In the short term, this could involve training sessions and retreats aimed specifically at enhancing UN tradecraft—including advocacy, negotiation, forecasting, and strategic planning—while over the longer term the creation of an EU multilateral diplomacy academy could be useful.
- We recommend that the Head of the EU Delegation extend the practice of hosting annual lunch discussions for all EU Ambassadors with Permanent Representatives of key countries (U.S., China, Russia, Japan and India) by hosting lunches with other key partners such as the Republic of Korea, the United Kingdom and the CANZ countries (i.e., Canada, Australia and New Zealand).
- We recommend that in order to bring the EU-Africa partnership to a new strategic level and deepening collaboration the EU Delegation in New York should increase the frequency of meetings with the African Union to once a quarter.
- We recommend that EU HoMs consider how the power of the 28 (27 plus EU) Permanent Representatives in New York could be better deployed as a collective by sharing responsibility between ambassadors for building deep relationships with counterparts. A strategic mapping exercise should be used to determine which EU Ambassador leads on maintaining relations with each non-EU counterpart followed by outreach at an early stage ahead of intergovernmental negotiations.
- We recommend that EU Member States increase coordination of elections to UN expert bodies and aim to establish a roster of potential candidates for elections initially focused on budget related bodies.
- We recommend that before each UNGA, EU HoMs should identify which facilitated negotiations are a priority for the EU, engage with the PGA early and encourage him/her to appoint co-facilitators from an EU Member State for these negotiations, while utilizing the wide-ranging European expertise.

## United Nations Security Council

- We recommend that the EU Delegation and EU Security Council members continue the position of EU Liaison Officer embedded in a Member State delegation in order to facilitate the flow of information to non-Security Council EU Member States and the EEAS in New York and Brussels.
- We recommend that the EU HoMs engage in a medium-term forecasting exercise every three months to identify challenges in future negotiations with the aim of helping the EEAS become more proactive on priority issues and potential language for resolutions.
- We recommend that the EU Delegation moves to organizing monthly meetings on Security Council matters with EU Ambassadors and Ambassadors from EFTA countries, candidate countries and the United Kingdom.
- We recommend that the practice of a joint appearance during press stakeouts (after Security Council meetings) and stake-ins (before Council meetings) should be continued with the Head of the EU Delegation preauthorized to participate where the EU has a common position.
- We recommend that EU members on the Security Council build on the recent practice of linked Council Presidencies and thematically link debates on issues during their Presidencies building momentum towards Security Council action.
- We recommend that, in line with the more flexible approach proposed for the UNGA, EU members of the Security Council consider speaking with one voice on a limited number—one or two per year—of Security Council discussions with the ‘Briefer of the Month’ taking the lead to showcase European unity.
- We recommend that EU Member States re-examine rotational schemes for elections to the Security Council in WEOG and EEG, with the aim of ensuring the presence of at least two elected EU Member States on the Security Council at all times.
- We recommend that the EU develop a strategy for EU elected members to take on and retain ‘pen-holding’ for drafting resolutions for priority negotiations.
- We recommend that the EU Delegation and Member States develop a plan for accrediting EEAS staff to the delegations of EU Security Council members in order to improve access to closed Security Council meetings.

## United Nations Secretariat

- We recommend that the European Commission and the Member States discuss EU extra-budgetary contributions to the UN Secretariat for priority areas of work. This would provide the UN Secretary-General with flexible funding for his priorities without the need to engage the UNGA.
- We recommend that the European Commission consider the establishment of an EU-wide JPO programme that would complement existing programs. This initiative should be overseen jointly by DG DEVCO, DG ECHO and the EEAS, with support by the European Personnel Selection Office.

- We recommend revitalizing the strategic level discussion between the UN Secretary-General and the Presidents of the European Commission and European Council including by inviting the UN Secretary-General to participate in meetings of the European Council.
- We recommend that the EU and UN develop a structured approach to collaboration on Sustainable Development, drawing on some of the established good practice in the area of peace and security.

## **United Nations Economic and Social Council**

- We recommend that the EU explore options for enhancing its status in ECOSOC with the aim of replicating the enhanced status the EU enjoys in the UNGA.
- We recommend that the EU present an EU-wide VNR in the next HLPF to signal the EU's ongoing commitment to the Sustainable Development Goals.
- We recommend that the EU hold a dedicated Permanent Representative level discussion on Sustainable Development to identify priorities and challenges on the horizon in the different fora where it is discussed (UNGA, ECOSOC and Executive Boards of the UN Funds and Programmes).

## **United Nations Funds and Programmes**

- We recommend that building on the example of the WFP Executive Board, the EU develops a roadmap for acquiring additional speaking rights in the Executive Boards of UNDP/UNFPA and UNICEF in recognition of its position as the most important non-Member State donor.
- We recommend that ahead of Executive Board sessions EU Member States move from information sharing to light-touch coordination in New York to complement the 'Team Europe' approach, under which the EU27 and the European Commission have moved towards joint programming on the ground.
- We recommend that the EU continue to monitor the composition and balance of senior positions in the UN Funds and Programmes to ensure EU nationals are not unfairly disadvantaged.
- We recommend that the EEAS and Commission encourage their representations in developing countries to establish strategic partnerships with the UN Resident Coordinator on the ground to ensure EU and UN priorities are closely aligned.
- We recommend that the EU and its Member States continue to prioritize funding for the UN Funds and Programmes and regularly communicate the total flow of funds from the European Commission and EU Member States.
- We recommend that the European Commission revisits the scope for providing EU core and thematic funding to the Funds and Programmes in light of the commitments Member States made in the UN Funding Compact.

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## Abbreviations

A3	The bloc of three elected African states on the United Nations Security Council
ACABQ	Advisory Committee on Administrative and Budgetary Questions
AIDS	Acquired immunodeficiency syndrome
ASEAN	Association of Southeast Asian Nations
CANZ	Canada, Australia and New Zealand
CARICOM	Caribbean Community
CELAC	Community of Latin American and Caribbean States
CFSP	Common Foreign and Security Policy
COVID-19	Coronavirus disease 2019
DG DEVCO	Directorate-General for International Cooperation and Development
DG ECHO	Directorate-General for European Civil Protection and Humanitarian Aid Operations
DNA	Deoxyribonucleic acid
E10	The ten elected members of the United Nations Security Council
ECOSOC	United Nations Economic and Social Council
EEAS	European External Action Service
EEC	European Economic Community
EEG	Eastern European States Group
EFTA	European Free Trade Association
EU	European Union
EU27	The 27 Member States of the European Union
EUR	Euro
G77	Group of 77
HLPF	High-level Political Forum on Sustainable Development
HoMs	Heads of Mission
ICJ	International Court of Justice
JCPOA	Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action
JPO	Junior Professional Officer
KAS	Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
P5	The five permanent members of the United Nations Security Council

PGA	President of the United Nations General Assembly
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
TEU	Treaty on European Union
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNFPA	United Nations Population Fund
UNGA	United Nations General Assembly
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
UNLOPS	United Nations Liaison Office for Peace and Security
UNSC	United Nations Security Council
UN Women	United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women
U.S.	United States of America
USD	United States dollar
VNR	Voluntary National Review
WEOG	Western European and Other States Group
WFP	World Food Programme

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