



How the **European Union** and the **United Nations** cooperate



Summary: How the European Union and the United Nations cooperate

The United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) share the same fundamental values and goals, namely the maintenance of international peace and security, the development of friendly relations on the basis of a due regard for the principles of equal rights and the self-determination of peoples, the promotion of international cooperation in the solution of economic, social, cultural and humanitarian problems, and the promotion and consolidation of the respect of human rights and fundamental freedoms for all people.

The European Security Strategy has said “In a world of global threats, global markets and global media, our security and prosperity increasingly depend on an effective multilateral system. (...) Strengthening the United Nations, equipping it to fulfil its responsibilities and to act effectively, is a European priority”.

In recent years, the EU has become a significant actor in the international community and plays an important role within the UN. The 27 EU Member States together command more than one eighth of the votes in the UN General Assembly, in which each of the 192 UN Member States has an equal vote. The EU – meaning both the European Community and the Member States – is the UN’s largest financial contributor. This applies not only to the regular budget, but also to the funding of official development assistance and peace-keeping missions.

Ban Ki-moon, Secretary-General of the United Nations, meets with Javier Solana, Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union



All EU countries are independent members of the UN; some of them are founding members of the global organization.* Shaping the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP) requires greater coordination between the EU Member States, the Council and the Commission in international organizations. In accordance with the EU Treaty, the EU Member States actively support the Union's foreign and security policy to bring Europe's influence to bear. EU interests are coordinated within the six Main Committees and other subsidiary bodies of the General Assembly, within the UN Economic and Social Council and its Commissions and within other bodies, including the UN agencies and offices such as the World Health Organisation (WHO), the Food and Agricultural Organisation (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Authority (IAEA) and the UN Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO). More than 1000 internal EU coordination meetings are held every year in New York, Geneva and Vienna in order to develop a common EU stance.

In the UN Security Council, the EU can bring its influence to bear particularly on issues upon which it has agreed a common position. Article 19 of the EU Treaty stipulates that those EU Member States which are also members of the UN Security Council will concert and keep the other Member States fully informed. Without prejudice to their responsibilities under the UN Charter, EU Member States with a permanent seat on the Security Council – France and the United Kingdom – shall foster the interests of the EU when fulfilling their duties.

*1945: Belgium, Denmark, France, Greece, Luxemburg, the Netherlands, Poland and the United Kingdom

1946: Sweden

1955: Austria, Bulgaria, Finland, Hungary, Ireland, Italy, Portugal, Romania and Spain

1960: Cyprus

1964: Malta

1973: Federal Republic of Germany and German Democratic Republic (reunified Germany since 1990)

1974: European Community granted status of permanent observer

1991: Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania

1992: Czech Republic and Slovenia

1993: Slovakia

As only states can become members of the UN, the EU is represented by whichever state holds the Presidency of the Council of the EU at any given time. The Presidency is particularly important to the day-to-day work of the EU, represents it in talks with other UN Member States, regional groups and organizations and makes declarations in the name of the Union. In open sessions of the Security Council, the EU Presidency puts forward the previously agreed EU position on the issues in question. The Council Secretariat of the EU has established liaison offices in New York and Geneva to ensure continuity in this work.

Leading the EU: the European Council lays down the guidelines for EU policy. The photograph shows the German Federal Chancellor Angela Merkel, President of the European Council during the first half of 2007, with German Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier and President of the European Commission José Manuel Barroso



Meeting in New York: UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon and the German Federal Foreign Minister Frank-Walter Steinmeier



Role of the European Community and the European Commission

Before the EU was created, the European Community was granted permanent observer status by the 29th session of the UN General Assembly in 1974. It now has observer status in most of the UN specialized agencies. However, it has been a full member of the Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) since 1991 and the World Trade Organisation (WTO) since 1995. Moreover, it is the only non-state party to more than 50 UN conventions and agreements, such as the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC).

Though it mostly has no voting rights, the European Commission is actively involved in the work of the UN. It works closely with the Presidency of the Council to represent the EU's position in several areas, especially in development, the environment and humanitarian aid. The European Commission is competent to speak on behalf of the EU in such areas as trade, fisheries and agriculture. It maintains representations at UN headquarters and the seat of large UN organizations in other cities.

José Manuel Barroso, President of the European Commission



The European Commission's longstanding relation with the UN system has been further strengthened in recent years through the conclusion of a series of strategic partnerships and memoranda of understanding with a number of key UN agencies and other bodies, to structure relations, build on comparative advantages, and further develop policy dialogue and technical co-operation.

1.4

Voting Behaviour in the General Assembly

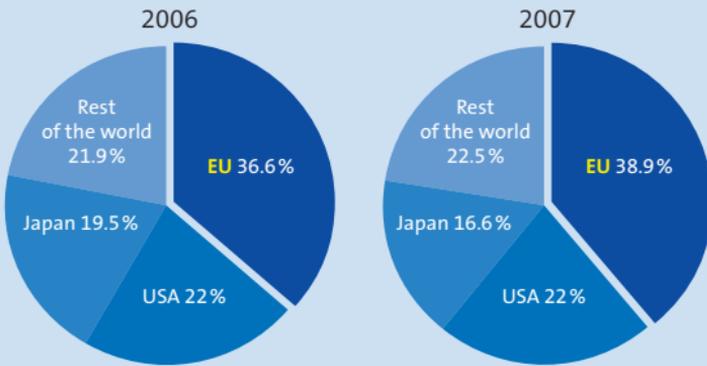
In the context of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP), the EU speaks, whenever possible, with one voice in the General Assembly. Since the beginning of the 1990s, the EU has displayed increasingly unified voting behaviour. The number of UN General Assembly Resolutions on which the EU Member States voted unanimously rose from 86% in the 46th session of the General Assembly (1991/92) to 97% in its 53rd session (1998/99) and has remained at around this level until the present. Even before the 2004 and 2007 EU enlargement rounds, most of the candidate countries already voted in line with the EU Member States.

General Assembly of the United Nations in New York

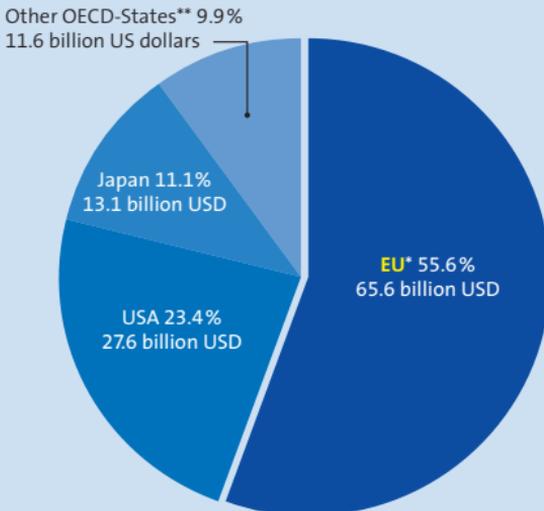


The EU (Member States and European Community) is the UN's largest financial contributors. The EU Member States provided around 36.6% of the UN's regular budget in 2006, and will provide around 38.9% in 2007. The European Community and the EU Member States are by far the largest donor to official development assistance, contributing 55.6% of global development aid. The EU Member States are likewise the largest financial contributor to UN peace-keeping missions, to the tune of 38.6% in 2006 and 40.6% in 2007, and they also provide around half of the budgets of UN funds and programmes.

Contributions to the UN Regular Budget



Donors of Official Development Assistance in 2005



*EU-15, Czech Republic, Hungary, Poland, Slovakia and the European Community

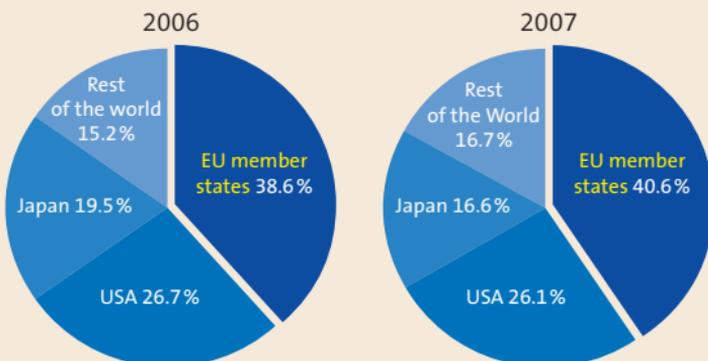
**Australia, Canada, Iceland, Republic of Korea, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland und Turkey

Peacekeeping and Conflict Prevention

The EU supports the UN in maintaining international peace and security. This applies particularly to the UN peacekeeping missions (“blue-helmet missions”) mandated by the Security Council. The EU Member States’ current share of the overall budget for UN peacekeeping missions amounts to around 40 percent, making the EU by far the largest financial contributor worldwide. The EU’s high level of commitment is also reflected in the number of soldiers, police and observers it provides. In November 2006, a total of 11,140 men and women, or around 13.5% of UN peacekeeping personnel, came from the EU.

Alongside the provision of soldiers and police for UN peacekeeping missions, the EU cooperates with the UN by fielding its own missions and operations within the framework of the Common Foreign and Security Policy (CFSP). These have included, for example, the successful EU operation EUFOR RD Congo, which was established in 2006 to support the UN peacekeeping mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, MONUC.

Main financial contributors to UN Peacekeeping Missions



African Peace Facility

Through the establishment of the African Peace Facility, the EU has been providing the African Union (AU) with funds for peace missions and for the development of an African security architecture since 2004. This is intended to enable the states of Africa to resolve that continent's conflicts in an autonomous and self-reliant manner. By 2007, the EU will have supported the Peace Facility with funds to the tune of 300 million euro altogether.

2.2

Human Rights

For both the UN and the EU, freedom, democracy, respect for human rights and the rule of law are fundamental principles and essential preconditions for the legitimacy of their actions. The relevant articles of the UN Charter are cited in the Preamble to the treaties establishing the EU. Since the adoption of the Treaties of Rome, the EU has committed itself to the promotion and protection of human rights and fundamental freedoms as enshrined in the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Role of the EU in UN Human Rights Bodies

The EU plays a very active role in the work of the new UN Human Rights Council, which replaces the former Commission on Human Rights, and the Third Committee of the UN General Assembly, which is responsible for human rights. It proposes resolutions and makes declarations on the protection and promotion of human rights and fundamental freedoms. Moreover, the EU was instrumental in establishing and developing the system of UN Special Rapporteurs on human rights issues.

Supporting the democratization process: July 2006 elections in Congo



The EU is by far the largest donor in the area of development assistance. More than half of the funds made available for development aid worldwide come from EU Member States. The EU is also one of the most important financial contributors to UN programmes, special organizations and funds. Payments from EuropeAid, the European Commission's cooperation office, to the UN have quadrupled in six years – from 234 million euro in 1999 to 904 million euro in 2005.

Providing the necessities of life:
well-building with EU funds in Afghanistan



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Millennium Goal equality: promoting training for women in India



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The Millennium Development Goals

The Millennium Development Goals have the active support of the EU. In September 2000, the heads of state and government of 149 states met at the UN Millennium Summit in New York. This meeting resulted in the adoption of the Millennium Declaration, which outlines the global challenges and the agenda for international politics at the beginning of the 21st century. A list of eight internationally agreed goals, the so-called Millennium Development Goals, was compiled from the chapter on development and the environment and concrete parameters were established for each.

The international community seeks to achieve these goals by means of its combined efforts by 2015. The UN is monitoring the implementation of the Millennium Declaration. The UN Secretary-General reports to the General Assembly in September every year on what progress has been made. In its efforts to combat poverty, the EU lays particular emphasis on the necessity to halt hunger and malnourishment, to halve the number of people in poverty by 2015 and to markedly improve standards of living for rural populations.

The Millennium Development Goals

Goal 1 → Halve the proportion of the world's population suffering from extreme poverty and hunger

Goal 2 → Ensure primary education for all children

Goal 3 → Promote gender equality and the political, economic and social empowerment of women, especially in education

Goal 4 → Reduce child mortality

Goal 5 → Improve maternal health

Goal 6 → Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other infectious diseases

Goal 7 → Ensure environmental sustainability

Goal 8 → Develop a global partnership for development

Sustainable development is not confined to environmental themes; it also includes economic and social questions. The social dimension is increasingly important to the EU, above all working standards, social cohesion, the achievement of a high rate of employment and social security. The EU sets great store by its relations with the International Labour Organization (ILO) with which the first agreement was concluded back in 1958 – the three European Communities were signatory since this preceded their merger into one Community. Within the EU, national strategies for sustainable development have been implemented and a 10 year plan for sustainable consumption and production has been developed since 2005. The aim is to increase the share of renewable energy sources.

The EU has been instrumental in ensuring that important UN conventions could enter into force (e.g. on the protection of the ozone layer, on climate change, on desertification and on biological diversity).

Climate change is one of the most urgent international challenges. The EU is on the front line in the fight against climate change and has made an unequivocal commitment to the implementation of the Kyoto Protocol. All EU Member States have ratified it, and the EU regularly calls upon other states to join the signatories.

Climate protection pioneer: the EU is relying on renewable energies



The EU – the European Community and the Member States – is the largest donor of humanitarian assistance worldwide. The Commission's Humanitarian Aid Office (ECHO) plays a special role here. ECHO's main task is to provide relief supplies and services through intermediary organizations in crisis regions. These goods and services include not only food, medicines and fuel but also medical teams, water treatment experts and logistics staff. Since its foundation in 1992, ECHO has funded and coordinated humanitarian missions in more than 100 countries outside the EU. More than 500 million euro are spent each year. Almost a third of this sum goes to UN humanitarian programmes such as the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the World Health Organization (WHO), the UN International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) or the World Food Programme (WFP). Through ECHO, every one of these UN organizations receives millions in financial support from the EU.

Supported by UNICEF:
Al Salam refugee camp in Sudan



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Financed by ECHO: landmine clearance in Kosovo



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It did not take the attacks of 11 September 2001 to make it clear that terrorism is a global challenge and that worldwide action is required to combat it. This fight is a top priority for the EU and is bound to remain so. Particularly the worldwide implementation of Resolution 1373 (2001), along with other Security Council resolutions to combat terrorism, is among the EU's most urgent concerns.

EU Member States are front runners in the ratification and practical implementation of UN conventions, protocols and Security Council resolutions aiming to combat terrorism (e.g. Res. 1373). The European Commission gives active support, also to assist third countries in implementing UN standards. The EU furthermore strongly supports the work of the UN Security Council's Counter-Terrorism Committee and al-Qaida/Taliban Sanctions Committee.

In addition, the EU and the UN are active in the fight against drug trafficking and organized crime. The first international convention against corruption came into force in December 2005 and has been signed by 140 Member States.

Spanish soldier participating in the UN peace mission in Lebanon (UNIFIL)



Cooperation within the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), and subsequently within the World Trade Organization (WTO), has encouraged international trade and generated considerable economic growth over the last 50 years. However, the 49 least developed countries (LDC) have only a 0.7% share of world trade. In the current talks on world trade, the so called Doha Development Agenda, the EU has made the integration of developing countries into the multilateral trade system its highest priority. The Doha round is to promote sustainable development and the fight against poverty.

Within the wider trade and development context, the EU supports the UN Conference on Trade and Development (UNCTAD) in its integrated approach to trade and development.

The EU promotes the role of UNESCO in the field of education and the protection of world cultural heritage. As signatories of the Convention for the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage, the EU Member States have committed themselves to protecting World Heritage Sites on their respective territories. The 27 EU Member States are currently home to 320 of the 830 World Heritage Sites. The European Community and EU Member States have recently ratified the UN Convention on protection and promotion of diversity of cultural expressions which will enter into force in 2007 with the aim to create an enabling environment for the diversity of cultural expressions in all societies.

UNESCO World Heritage Site since 1997:
Old Town of the Latvian capital Riga



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