

EU AT

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Fifth Informal Plenary Meeting
on Mandate Review

Statement on behalf of the European Union

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(check against delivery)

Mr Chairman,

I have the honour to speak on behalf of the European Union. The Acceding Countries Bulgaria and Romania, the Candidate Countries Croatia, Turkey, the Former Yugoslav Republic of Macedonia, the Countries of the Stabilisation and Association Process and potential candidates Bosnia and Herzegovina, Serbia and Montenegro as well as Ukraine and Moldova align themselves with this statement.

As we are carrying on today with our informal consultations on Mandate Review, let me start with one or two general remarks. I will then turn to Cluster B "Promotion of Sustainable Growth and Sustainable Development" and Cluster C "Development of Africa", as indicated in the Programme of Work presented by the Co-Chairs.

General Remarks

Mr Chairman,

It has been two weeks since our last our last exchange of views. Let me briefly indicate how the European Union is perceiving the process at this stage. These informal meetings of the General Assembly provide a valuable forum for an open debate. We encourage an interactive approach in our discussions and welcome the active involvement of the Secretariat as demonstrated by the physical or virtual presence of Under-Secretaries General Ocampo (and Costa ?) Assistant Administrator Janneh, as well as the new Special Adviser for Africa Ambassador Legwaila whom we wish to congratulate on his recent appointment.

The EU welcomes the summary provided by Co-Chairs at our previous session and fully subscribes to many of the elements for consensus identified. We value the inclusiveness and transparency of the process. We highlight the nature of Mandate Review as a valuable and necessary stock-taking and update, aimed at improving the work of the organisation for the benefit of all member states. It is not intended as a cost-cutting exercise, a definition which we apply in particular to the clusters we are discussing today. We believe that meaningful results from this first phase will help enhance momentum around Mandate Review. At this stage, we do not believe it is advisable to earmark any potential savings for any particular use. Our approach is that we should first try to generate spare capacities before deciding within the competent organs on those functions most in need of reinforcement.

The EU looks forward to the Secretariat's detailed suggestions on opportunities for consolidation of reporting requirements across the full range of thematic priorities of the General Assembly. In addition to taking first steps of consolidation, the outcome of the first phase should also determine a process for the following phases in the mid- and long term. In this context, the EU recalls its request to the Secretariat to provide, as soon as possible, a more comprehensive set of proposals on the consolidation of reporting requirements

We welcome the recent inception of Mandate Review efforts both in the Security Council and in the Economic and Social Council. We will also make our contributions to the debates in these organs and look forward to collecting the early products of these reflections of as part of the first phase of Mandate Review. We also believe that Mandate Review is complementary to other ongoing processes such as Management Reform, the High-Level Panel on system-wide coherence, GA revitalisation, environmental governance or ECOSOC reform, all of which are interlinked and mutually reinforcing.

As we go through this first review of Clusters, it is already evident that the reform of agendas, working methods and mandates is more advanced in some thematic areas. I should like to

highlight as an example Cluster C ("Development of Africa") where reform and streamlining of agenda-items has proven very beneficial to the effectiveness and relevance of our work.

Mr Chairman,

The EU has constantly stressed the high importance of development issues in the UN context. Our commitment to new levels of ODA, which will result in an additional annual 20 billion euros ODA by 2010, underlines the priority the EU attaches to development. We are striving for an ambitious and concrete programme of action, involving more and better financing for development, including through innovative mechanisms; as well as paying special attention to the particular needs of Africa. In this regard, the EU recalls its collective commitment to allocate at least 50% of the agreed increase in ODA resources to Africa. We clearly see the need for longer term, more radical reform of the UN development architecture, Mandate Review, we believe, makes a valuable contribution to this process notably by rationalising mandates and reports.

Cluster B "Promotion of Sustainable Growth and Sustainable Development"

Mr Chairman,

The European Union recognises the essential role of the United Nations in Promotion of Sustainable Growth and Sustainable Development which is also reflected in the conclusions of the 2005 World Summit. Let me now turn to our observations on Mandate Review in this Cluster.

Reporting requirements:

According to the online registry some 1140 out of 2809 mandates include references to reports, analytical studies, statistics or publications. This figure underlines the Secretary General's observation in his report "Mandating and delivering" that a substantial reduction in both the number of reports as well as their volume is urgently needed. The report suggests combined or streamlined reports in areas such as human settlements, environment, health, population or social development. The EU supports the Secretary General's proposals on reducing the volume of documentation such as substituting reports prepared specifically for the General Assembly on social groups (youth, ageing and disabled persons, family) by simply referring to reports prepared for the Commission on Social Development. The EU also sees merit in examining other means of reducing the number of reports such as the use of external information sources, flagship publications and core policy reports or reader surveys to determine whether reports and publications are actually read and satisfying demands.

Distribution of work between General Assembly/Main Committees – ECOSOC/functional commissions:

There is a clear need for a more coherent and unified UN approach to follow-up to the internationally agreed development goals, including the Millennium Development Goals and to rationalise the work of and distribution among the UN's principal organs.

The EU shares the view that ECOSOC ought to effectively make use of its comparative advantage as a coordinating body having a comprehensive overview of the work of its various functional commissions. ECOSOC should, therefore, better review, guide and monitor the work of its subsidiary machinery by highlighting areas of overlap and duplication and by making recommendations to its subsidiary bodies on how to overcome such duplication. ECOSOC should live up to its role by more comprehensively and analytically integrating its various reported inputs into a distilled concentrate of policy recommendations for the GA and its Main Committees. Likewise ECOSOC should critically examine its subsidiary bodies' mandates on a regular basis and advise its functional commissions on potential transgressions on their respective mandates.

Distribution of work between the Secretariat and Funds and Programs:

The Secretary General's report mentions a list of potential overlaps between the work of the Secretariat – particularly its Department for Economic and Social Affairs (DESA) – and UN Funds and Programs in the areas of trade and development, macroeconomic issues and finance, sustainable development and human settlements or population issues. Funds and Programs such as UNICEF, UNFPA or UNDP have increasingly become centres of normative expertise for their defined priority issues. The EU advocates a more clear-cut division of work, consolidation of capacities and a strategic reprioritisation of work between the Secretariat and Funds and Programs in order to eliminate overlaps and redundancies and requests the SG to report on the work of the Executive Committee on Economic and Social Affairs to identify further options in this regard.

Regular program of technical cooperation:

The regular programme of technical cooperation was initiated in 1946 and is funded from the assessed contributions to the biennium budget. In order to consider a comprehensive review of the regular program of technical cooperation the EU would appreciate clarification from the Secretariat on, inter alia, the scope and operating modalities of this regular program, on its comparative advantage as well as link and possible overlaps with other voluntarily funded program funds for technical cooperation and on the logic for its separate funding.

Observance of international days/years:

While the observance of international days and years is an important tool for the UN to reach out to and raise awareness of the international community, the EU acknowledges that inflationary use of observances reduces their impact. We support the proposals made by the Secretary General in his report "Mandating and delivering" and encourage the General Assembly to accordingly review those roughly 120 mandates referring to international observances. As to international days, we would propose that the GA may decide to choose on an annual basis no more than ten international days to be celebrated for the upcoming year. Similarly, there should not be more than two international years for a given calendar year.

Coordination leadership:

The online registry contains 731 mandates which alternatively call upon the Secretary General, the Secretariat, all entities of the United Nations system or the Member States to fulfill coordination tasks. The EU supports the SG's proposal that, when adopting resolutions, Member States should provide strategic direction and objectives while the Secretary General should determine the entity or department most competent to lead and coordinate the implementation efforts.

Cluster C "Development of Africa"

Mr Chairman,

At the outset, we would like to note that significant and successful efforts of rationalisation have already taken place in 2002. Chapter C in the General Assembly's agenda now foresees two sub-items: 1) New Economic Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and 2) Causes of conflict and promotion of durable peace and sustainable development. The concentration on these two sub-items has entailed some consolidated reporting and has contributed to making the consideration of the "Development of Africa" more visible and relevant. The EU is also acutely aware of the important link between these topics and Cluster A, "Peace and Security".

Referring to the recommendations contained in the Report, the European Union shares the overall assessment of the Secretary General, namely to concentrate African efforts and those of the international community on the implementation of NEPAD and support to the African Union.

This implies streamlining the previous mandates in this context, in particular those concerning the UN New Agenda for the Development of Africa of the 1990s and the Programme for the Second Industrial Decade.

As far as the implementation architecture is concerned, the EU strongly encourages improving the coherence and coordination between the different actors in the area of Development of Africa, in particular between the "focal point", the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa and the Office of the High Representative for Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States. This is of great relevance, as African Countries constitute 68% of the LDC group and 48% of the LLDC Group. In addition, better complementarity with the work of other UN entities, including but not limited to the Department of Political Affairs, should be encouraged.

In the context of the establishment of the Peace-Building Commission, the EU encourages a smooth transition from the existing Ad hoc Advisory Groups on African Countries emerging from Conflict to the PBC, once the PBC decides to take over individual country situations. The PBC will be able to benefit from the lessons learned within these groups.

As in other Clusters, we support the Secretary General's recommendation that member states should review and streamline reporting mandates. In this particular context, we would focus on those analytic reports which cover generic thematic issues.

Mr Chairman,

As we have emphasised, the EU is examining all mandates with an open mind, including those initiated or co-sponsored by its members. We will continue working our way through the manifold mandates and will come back with more detailed proposals on particular mandates contained in the Registry at the next opportunity.