

# **The United Nations and the European Union: An Ever Stronger Partnership**

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## **SESSION 2: UN-EU Cooperation on Development, Humanitarian, Human Rights and Refugees Issues**

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**Mr. John Aylieff**, World Food Programme:

Thank you.

In the 2003 consolidated approach launched in Brussels, commissioner Paul Nielsen said that every time he thought about some of the challenges which donors face in funding agencies dealing with humanitarian issues and development, it brought to mind his favourite Beatles song "Money can't buy me love".

The EU is the largest humanitarian donor in the world, and within it, the EC is a major player, particularly for the UN humanitarian agencies. In 2003, the EC humanitarian Office provided 600 million euro to humanitarian operations across the world and 30% of this was channelled through humanitarian agencies. But the EU-UN collaboration in humanitarian crises is based on more than just money, and as Omar Bakhet has said earlier on, certainly on more than just contracts. It is based fundamentally on partnership. And it is a partnership that has been growing stronger and stronger over the past four to five years. One can trace the evolution and the strengthening of this partnership through the EC Regulations and Communications, which govern and concern humanitarian assistance. There are three key milestones: firstly, in the 1996 Regulation concerning humanitarian aid, UN agencies and international organisations were specifically mentioned as partners of the EC. I am told this is one of the first Regulations which specifically mention the UN. Secondly, the 1999 Communication on the future of Community humanitarian activities spoke on the Commission's intention to further build on the partnership with key multilateral agencies such as the UN and the Red Cross, by offering program support for activities of mutual interest, but I will come back to that later. Thirdly, the 2001 Communication 'Building an effective partnership with the UN in the field of development and humanitarian affairs' said two very important things. Firstly, on a policy level, it said that the EC should increase its voice in determining UN policy. Secondly, on an operational level it spoke of matching the mandates and defining areas of common interest between the EU and the UN. So with these three key milestones, the basis was provided for cooperation, and for a stronger partnership between the EU and the UN in the realm of humanitarian assistance. Let's go into that deeper and look at some of the things that have been happening.

Firstly, since 2000, we have had strategic and programming dialogues with the EU, and particularly the Commission, and with the UN, and particularly the humanitarian UN agencies. These are high-level policy dialogues, held on an annual basis, the aim of which is to identify common ground for collaboration where geographical, or thematic strategies or activities coincide. So it comes back to the matching of mandates from the 2001 Communication. At first, the focus of these meetings was too much on contractual and financial issues. But what we found in the last one to two years, is that we have really made a shift through joint efforts on the policy and strategic level. And the spirit sounds more like this: 'this is our common view and analysis of the crisis in South Africa, Iraq, Kosovo or North Korea, and now let's discuss what we jointly, as partners, are going to do about it'. The second thing is the consolidated appeals process, obviously a

key instrument for the UN. We found there is increasing EU interest in this process, both in the field and at Brussels level. In Brussels, the commitment is shown by the co-hosting by the EC of some consolidated appeal launches. At the field level, however, there has been increased involvement of the mutual partners of the UN and the EC, particularly ECO, and this has been strongly encouraged by ECO. There was increased involvement in developing assessments and humanitarian strategies for the different crises we are dealing with. Thirdly, there is the area of thematic funding. I believe two or three years ago, for the first time ECO was able to offer a special multi-year funding to allow UN and international organisation partners to develop core areas of their mandates. I believe UNHCR was the first guinea pig for this funding and received funding for the development of their protection work. The World Food Program is now discussing with ECO the possibility of funding for Food Security Assessments and improving the targeting of the most probable beneficiaries. This funding, in my opinion, is important for two reasons. First of all, it engenders a sense of ownership in the EC, of the institutional strengthening of the UN. In the Executive Board of WFP last year, there was talk about the need for the EC not only to criticise the UN in areas where the UN should improve, but to also provide the UN with the tools and the means to improve those areas. Secondly, it proves the commitment to helping agencies and improving the quality of their response to crises, as opposed to just the quantity in terms of the number of projects and the levels of funding. One of the reasons why the focus of our collaborations has shifted from the contractual and financial aspects, which did seem to dominate us for a number of years in the past, to the policy and strategic level, is that we have managed to put many of the financial and legal constraints behind us. In the second year, last year, of the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement, the FAFA, this is the next step in the evolution, i.e. the signature of strategic partnership agreements with key humanitarian agencies and development UN agencies, which are now being negotiated with roughly ten UN agencies. What the strategic partnerships will do, is reinforce the partnerships in humanitarian affairs and development and also, importantly, to outline and confirm areas where mandates and interests do match.

Why is it then that the EC and the UN are natural partners in the field of humanitarian assistance? First of all, there is a question of shared and common values. The 2001 Communication put it very simply: the provision of humanitarian relief to victims of conflicts and natural disasters, together with supports to people's efforts to find a path toward sustainable development, lie both at the heart of the EC humanitarian and development policy and of the UN's mandate and activities. Furthermore, other sectors important to the UN, such as peace and security, economic and social affairs and human rights, have a clear bearing on humanitarian aid and find residence in EU policies. The values espoused by ECO: neutrality, impartiality and independence, are shared by the UN humanitarian agencies, as is the principle of providing assistance only on the basis of needs. Secondly, I believe the UN can play a vital role where it is not possible for the EC to work through governments or were working through governments might undermine the very neutrality and independence that the EC is striving for. I am thinking here particularly of conflict situations. Interestingly enough, humanitarian assistance is one of the few, perhaps only, areas where the implementation is not done by the EC delegations in the field, but by partners and UN agencies and organisations in the field. There is also the issue of sustainability. The 1996 Regulation on Humanitarian Aid broadened the definition and allowed, I believe for the first time, for emergency rehabilitation to be considered in immediate post crisis situations. The UN is able to offer, perhaps more than other organisations, a longer-term perspective in the country, and a more sustained presence. The UN has mandates which span humanitarian assistance, post emergency recovery and development.

There is no good partnership where challenges do not lay before us, so allow me to outline some of the challenges with regard to humanitarian collaboration and assistance and then conclude. First of all, both we and ECO in particular, the EC in general, believe that there needs to be far more collaboration at the field level in need assessment: what are the humanitarian needs, how do we define them and how do we best reach vulnerable people. ECO is encouraging us, as it is the UN, to look at risk assessments

from a very multi-sectoral perspective. So we are dealing with the WFP, WHO, Unicef, UNHCR plus many of our NGO partners in trying to broaden our own perspective. So, when the WFP looks at food crises, we try and involve actors like health NGOs or the WHO, to try and look at the health aspects which affect nutrition. ECO has been a prime mover here and has been pushing us correctly to consider this multi-sectoral nature of full-need assessments. Secondly, both ECO and the UN humanitarian agencies recognize the key role that NGO partners can play, both in the assessment and in the development of humanitarian strategies, as I mentioned earlier. I believe the UN as a whole has not put enough emphasis on NGOs, the capacity that they have and the partnerships we could have with them. Through the encouragement of many of our donors, including the EC, UN agencies have been looking much more towards strategic partnerships with NGOs, as opposed to contractual arrangements. I suppose that in that sense our approach to NGOs now is taking the same evolution as our relationship with the EC. Another area which presents a challenge to us both is to increase the coherence and clarity of our policies on both sides. The need to promote inter-agency collaboration on the UN side is well-known. The need to clarify our roles and responsibilities and the need to look at which UN agencies are best suited to act at the various stages of the crisis and the post-crisis phase, is well-documented and well known. The UN has taken some steps to try to improve this. We believe that, likewise on the EU side, the challenge is to find more coherence and clarity on the links between humanitarian and development policy. When ECO pulls out of a crisis in the post humanitarian crisis phase, what is the strategy for post-conflict rehabilitation and development? And which particular part of the Commission or of the EU can kick in at that critical stage to ensure that transition is successful?

Concluding, I'll echo the words of Omar Bakhet, namely that the relationship between the EU and the UN, both in the humanitarian arena but also in a wider perspective has moved from a relationship where the UN was essentially an implementing agency for the EC, to one where the UN is a credible and equal partner, and we certainly greatly appreciate the efforts of our directing interlocutors in the Commission and in the EU to make this happen. We look forward very much to developing this partnership further and to fulfilling our joint objective of providing more efficient, more speedy and greater-level humanitarian assistance to people in crises across the world.

Thank you.