

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

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SESSION 3: UN-EU Cooperation in the Area of Security: Conflict Prevention, Conflict Management, Post-Conflict Reconstruction, Terrorism

Mr. Sven Biscop, Senior Researcher, KIIB/IRRI, Visiting Professor, Ghent University:

Thank you. I am sorry for dragging you away from your coffee, not everybody is happy about being the first speaker after lunch, but it does not bother me. I am quite confident that the number of people falling asleep will no be much larger than when I speak at another moment of the day. In fact, a lot of what I am about to say has already been touched upon this morning by Mr. Van Meeuwen in his keynote speech. I am not quite sure how to interpret this, either it means that I have more of a ministry culture than I am aware of, or that the Institute, or the Ministry think tank has become so influential that the Ministry is now actually anticipating upon what we are going to say, I leave the decision up to you. I will tackle the subject from the perspective of the European Security Strategy that was adopted in December last year under the title "A secure Europe in a better world", a strategy in which the UN are accorded a central role. This is due to the third of three objectives that are defined in the strategy - I would say the most important one- namely 'establishing an effective Multilateral System'. The strategy defines it more closely as 'a stronger international society, well-functioning institutions and a rule-based international order'. This is the most important objective because it is all-embracing. It concerns the world order as such. A choice for multilateralism is a matter of principle on behalf of the EU, we aim for cooperation rather than confrontation, but I think it is also a choice for reasons of effectiveness. The only way by which we can hope, and I stress hope, to deal with global issues is the way of multilateral cooperation. And the Security Strategy says: at the heart of this multilateral system are the UN. This means that strengthening the UN, according to the Strategy, is a strategic priority for the EU. And indeed we have to strengthen it for we can profess or believe in the system, but we should also take into account that there are a number of flaws in the UN system, and that it therefore does not always operate the way we want it to. So it is up to the EU to take the lead and try and mend the situation, which was recognized quite frankly by the SG of the UN himself in his speech to the General Assembly, amongst others, in September last year. It was a very frank opening speech in which he said far-reaching measures of reform were in order. What could 'strengthening the UN' mean? I see two ways of action that are related to the Security Council. Implicitly, the Security Strategy says that, in those cases where the EU would think a military intervention or the use of force is necessary, it will do this only as an instrument of last resort and, in principle, with a mandate from the UN, as the UN Security Council has the prime responsibility for maintaining international peace and security. Perhaps we could have said so a bit more explicitly, because it is exactly on this issue that the divide within the EU has caused a paralysis of European Foreign Policy in the case of the invasion of Iraq. Leaving an ambiguity means that there is a chance that we will be faced with the same situation if another crisis arises. There is also the question of the exemplary role of the EU. If the EU does not say explicitly that it supports the collective security system of the UN, then who will? So if I were to voice 1 criticism of the Security Strategy it is that, in my opinion, it could have been a bit more explicit on this matter of the use of force. In fact, in another

document on the basic principles of the new Strategy against the Proliferation of Weapons of Mass Destruction, which afterwards led to a Strategy on WoMD, it said that the Security Council had to be the final arbiter on the consequences of non-compliance. If we want the Security Council to fulfil this role, we must also make sure that we can operate effectively. This means two things: on the longer term, we should keep in mind the objective of reforming the Security Council as such, meaning curtailing veto-power or at least, amend the composition of the Security Council. I think this is necessary to render decisions more legitimate, because the current composition no longer really reflects the state of world affairs. And legitimacy is the corner stone of the collective security system. But then, we must admit, even an academic must admit something from time to time, that in the short term this is not politically feasible. Luckily, I would say, there is another option that allows more chances of useful steps forward. I am thinking of the effort to define a sort of policy framework, for the Security Council to use to decide on interventions. When I say intervention, however, I do not mean military intervention, not necessarily, I mean intervention with all the instruments that the Security Council and the member states of the UN have at their disposal: diplomatic initiatives, economic pressure, peace-keeping and observer missions and, ultimately, the use of force. A clearer policy framework that would define in what circumstances an intervention of some sort by the international community, is needed: in cases when member states ignore or violate their commitments towards their own population, or in case member states violate their duties towards international peace and security. If we have such a framework that would define the circumstances in which we collectively feel that an intervention on the part of the international community is needed, it would allow the Security Council to intervene in a more early stage. And the earlier we intervene, the less likely that an intervention is a military one. Plus, the earlier we intervene, the bigger the chance of success; and the more successful the multilateral system, the less need for unilateral actions outside the legal framework of the Charter. Nowadays, the so-called inefficacy of the multilateral system is often used as some sort of excuse by those who prefer unilateral action. In this regard, a lot of work has already been done. In 2001 there was a very interesting report published by the International Commission on Intervention and State Sovereignty, established in the framework of the General Assembly at the initiative of Canada. It tried to summarise the circumstances relating to states that violate the rights of their own populations, which calls for international intervention of some kind. We can now extend the field of application of this exercise to states that do not live up to the international standards for peace and security, states that engage in proliferation, that are proven to support armed violence in other states and so on. I hope that the high-level panel that the Secretary General has established could be some sort of successor to the ICISS report, which, being published at the end of 2001, was somewhat in the aftermath of 9-11.

I think it is interesting to quote the official objective of this high-level panel, namely to recommend "clear and practical measures for ensuring effective collective action based on a rigorous analysis of future threats to peace and security, an appraisal of the contribution collective action can make and the thorough assessment of existing approaches, instruments and mechanisms, including the principal organs of the UN". In other words, it is quite a far-reaching mandate which, if it leads to a document on which we can find political consensus among all the key players, i.e. the five permanent members, gives us a reasonable chance in the short term of reviving the Security Council and reviving its effectiveness as the final arbiter of non-compliance, as it is stated in EU documents. Of course, it will not be enough to just improve the decision-making capacity of the Security Council. If a decision is made, it has to be implemented, which means that the member states must be willing to offer the necessary financial means and military forces if these are called for. Here again, there is a very positive development. In the EU context, France, Germany and the UK have put forward the so-called battle-group concept. The aim is to create rapidly deployable forces of some 1500 men, which, it is said, would be primarily deployed for UN operations. So, there is clearly a political will on the part of these member states to assume part of the responsibility for international peace and security by contributing to UN operations. As Mr. Cloos said this morning,

apart from contributing troops to UN operations, the EU can also act as a kind of subcontractor for the UN and stage operations at the request of the UN, like we did in the Congo with Artemis, again a very positive development. Only recently, in September last year, the EU and the UN signed a joint declaration on cooperation in crisis management, so, obviously, things are moving. In fact, EU-UN cooperation is already quite far developed in the field of conflict prevention and stabilisation, which is the important stage before crisis management. Again, as was said this morning, the Commission and the Secretariat of the UN work together quite closely with their watch-list of priority countries, monitoring developments with crisis potential.

I think, however, that a word of warning is in order: in the current international context we devote perhaps too much attention to the political and military side of things, but that is not the only important side. Effective multilateralism can not be achieved by measures in the political and military fields alone. Effective multilateralism for me means an effective system of global governance. A system that -at a global level- can provide access for everybody to the same core public goods that states provide to their citizens at the national level, peace and security, but also an open economic order, an enforceable legal system, a welfare system, and so on. It is a lack of access to these core global public goods, which is for me the most important overall threat to international peace and security. So, global governance as such, I think, should be the priority objective of the Security Strategy. In fact, I think therefore perhaps 'Security Strategy' might not be so good a name for the document, why not have called it 'external action strategy'? Because if you follow through all the implications, that is what it is. The choices that are made in the Strategy do not impact solely on ESDP, not even solely on CFSP, but on all aspects of EU external actions, in all pillars. That is where I think the added value of the strategy is, in integrating all the instruments at our disposal under one common agenda: effective global governance.

Time for some advertising now: it is precisely because of this dual approach, that in the Royal Institute, we -almost simultaneously- produced two documents: one on security, which was published at the end of last year as the Belgian contribution to the debate on the Security Strategy, but also quite recently one on global governance. A number of priorities are proposed therein, for Belgian diplomacy to follow. You can find this document at the entrance. I hope my directors will be satisfied, and after this short commercial break, I shall just conclude by saying this: I think it is in this field of global governance, by proposing this integration of all instruments available in all fields of external action, that the EU can act as an innovator and also as a front-runner in the UN context. Thank you.
