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# Rethinking EU-UN cooperation in international crisis management: Lisbon and beyond

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This Policy Paper is the ninth in a series that will be produced by the Jean Monnet Multilateral Research Network on 'The Diplomatic System of the European Union'. The network is centred on three partner institutions: Loughborough University (UK), Katholieke Universiteit Leuven (BE) and Maastricht University (NL). It also brings together colleagues from a wide range of academic institutions within the EU, and includes participants from EU institutions and non-governmental organisations. The aim of the Policy Papers series is to contribute to current debates about the emerging EU system of diplomacy and to identify the key challenges to which the EU's diplomatic system will need to respond in the short and medium term.

# Rethinking EU-UN cooperation in international crisis management: Lisbon and beyond

Luis N. González Alonso<sup>1</sup>

## Overview

Owing to the development of its security and defence policy, the European Union became at the outset of the past decade a more attractive partner for the United Nations in the field of crisis management. In addition to its traditional support through different financial instruments, for the first time from the perspective of the UN, the EU has turned itself into a potential direct provider of civilian or even military capabilities for peacekeeping and peace building activities. The 2003 *Joint Declaration*, signed in New York by representatives of both organisations in the immediate aftermath of operation *Artemis/DR Congo*, formalised this new pattern of cooperation<sup>2</sup>.

Nevertheless, and in spite of some other significant and to a certain extent unexpected achievements such as the military operations EUFOR DR Congo and EUFOR Chad, the momentum of this relationship has clearly tended to decline over the last few years. Leaving aside controversial episodes such as the one prompted by the launch of EULEX Kosovo, the EU has proved to be a not so reliable partner when it comes to mobilising key capabilities, both civilian and military, at the request of or in cooperation with UN missions and, what is probably more important, to deploying them according to a comprehensive approach; this is precisely one of the main concerns and more demanding challenges ahead for the UN itself in the field of crisis management.

Assuming that major reforms relating to these issues are underway in both organisations -in the case of the EU following the entry into force of the Lisbon Treaty and in that of the UN mainly as a consequence of the implementation of its “New Horizon Initiative”<sup>3</sup> -, this seems to be a suitable moment to review the general orientation of that partnership and to explore the prospects for real improvements in it. Furthermore, and from a strictly EU perspective, cooperation with the UN in crisis management appears to be a meaningful test case for verifying effectiveness in enhancing the coherence of its new external action instruments, particularly as far as the sensitive link between security and development is concerned. This policy paper aims to briefly assess the more significant aspects of this on-going process.

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<sup>2</sup> *Joint Declaration on UN-EU Co-operation in Crisis Management*, doc. 12730/03, 19 September 2003. Four years later, in June 2007, a further and less formal *Joint Statement* was made public giving rise on the part of the EU to a follow up process through successive six-monthly progress reports.

<sup>3</sup> See in this respect, *The New Horizon Initiative: Progress Report n° 1*, UN Department of Peacekeeping Operations and Department of Field Support, New York, October 2010.

## A partnership largely tailored on EU constitutional constraints

Although both the EU and the UN pride themselves on being able to combine a broad range of instruments as a distinctive feature of their ability to cope with international crises, their record in effectively deploying them in a comprehensive manner remains “ambiguous” to say the least<sup>4</sup>. One could even argue that to a certain extent they face similar problems and shortcomings in striving to develop what is commonly known as a “comprehensive approach” to crisis management. In his seminal *Report on peacebuilding in the immediate aftermath of conflict*, the UN Secretary General highlighted “the fragmented nature of governance across the United Nations system” and its “pillars” structure as complicating factors which prevent it from making the most of its unrivalled capabilities in the areas of peace and security, human rights, development and humanitarian action<sup>5</sup>; word by word the kind of statement that we might have expected to hear in the same context from any EU representative.

Against this backdrop, it may not come as a surprise that the relationship between the two organisations has so far evolved in a fragmented and unbalanced way, deeply influenced by EU constitutional peculiarities and its privileged position vis-à-vis the UN as a major potential supplier of both financial support and valuable capabilities in the field of crisis management. On the one hand, though without a clearly defined strategy, over the last decade the EU Commission has consistently increased its commitment to the *United Nations Development Group* and, in particular, to the crucial role its many agencies play in crisis situations<sup>6</sup>. On the other, and in the framework of the aforementioned *Joint Declaration*, the General Secretariat of the Council with its new security and defence structures became a fully-fledged partner for the UN Departments of Peacekeeping Operations and Political Affairs.

Given its novelty, much more attention has understandably been paid to this latter aspect of what might be called the EU-UN global partnership in crisis management, even leading to mistakenly identifying the part with the whole for certain purposes. However, major achievements have also taken place in the former aspect as well and not only from a merely quantitative perspective. This is the case, for instance, of the Commission’s decision to join in 2008 the *Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning Framework*, previously developed by the UNDG and the World Bank in order to improve coordination in the international response to immediate needs of countries emerging from conflict<sup>7</sup>. As the Libyan crisis is currently showing<sup>8</sup>, the EU may be at least as helpful to the UN and to its coordination role in a post-conflict context through this scheme as by deploying a CSDP mission, such as the one foreseen in that country, though finally not deemed necessary to

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<sup>4</sup> Claudia Major and Christian Molling, “More than wishful thinking? The EU, UN, NATO and the comprehensive approach to military crisis management”, in Joachim A. Koops (ed.), *Military Crisis Management: the challenge of inter-organizationalism*, *Studia Diplomatica*, vol. LXII, 2009, 3, p. 27.

<sup>5</sup> A/63/881-S/2009/304, 11 June 2009, paragraph 24.

<sup>6</sup> See in this respect the main findings of the independent *Evaluation Report of the Commission’s external cooperation with partner countries through the organisations of the UN family*, May 2008 ([http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation\\_reports/reports/2008/1252\\_vol1\\_en.pdf](http://ec.europa.eu/europeaid/how/evaluation/evaluation_reports/reports/2008/1252_vol1_en.pdf)).

<sup>7</sup> *Joint Declaration on Post-Crisis Assessments and Recovery Planning*, signed on behalf of the European Commission by RELEX Commissioner Benita Ferrero on the 25 September 2008 (available at <http://www.undg.org/index.cfm?P=806>).

<sup>8</sup> See in this respect EU Foreign Affairs Council Conclusions on Libya, adopted 10 October 2011, paragraph 8.

implement, in support of the activities of the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA).

The fragmented nature of this relationship has also been perceptible in its institutional dimension, basically embodied in the EU-UN Steering Committee. Set up by the 2003 *Joint Declaration* as the consultative mechanism for cooperation between the two organisations in the field of crisis management, EU representation has clearly been dominated in its meetings throughout this period by the Council Secretariat CSDP structures with a very limited presence for the Commission (DG RELEX). Among other developments, the emergence and consolidation in the last few years of the EU Instrument for Stability (IfS) as an extremely valuable tool to support UN initiatives in this context has challenged the viability of this pattern of dialogue and advocates a more balanced and comprehensive approach to it on the part of the European Union.

In any case, and despite some common features, the main difference between both “pillars” of the EU-UN partnership probably lies in the degree of stability the EU is ready to accept in its commitment to UN action. Whereas financial support through former EC instruments or the European Development Fund (EDF) in the case of the *African Peace Facility* may be predictable and even long-lasting, when it comes to drawing on Member States’ capabilities in the framework of the CSDP, be it civilian or military, their availability may never be taken for granted and time constraints always become a major concern for their deployment. This, of course, is not expected to change in the foreseeable future, as neither is the refusal of the EU to be seen as a “regional organisation” according to Chapter VIII of the UN Charter nor its reluctance to get directly involved in missions under UN command.

### **Towards an enhanced and more coherent EU-UN partnership in crisis management**

As noted before, and despite all these factors, there currently seems to be a clear window of opportunity to enhance cooperation between the EU and the UN in this field. Obviously, I am not talking about major political transformations of a structural nature, even if the EU’s status at the UN General Assembly had finally been upgraded and the coordination role of the new EU Delegation in New York reinforced in relation to issues on the Security Council’s agenda<sup>9</sup>. It is quite clear that these reforms are unlikely to alter in any substantial way the EU’s political profile in security matters vis-à-vis the UN. Nevertheless, there is room for improvement, which might be of some significance, at other levels. And this seems to be the perception within the European External Action Service (EEAS) as well, as evidenced by the internal reflection process in this regard launched immediately after its full establishment<sup>10</sup>.

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<sup>9</sup> As Daniele Marchesi recalls, “since December 2009 “UNSC briefings” are chaired directly by the EU delegation in New York, under the authority of the HR/VP, and on 6 January 2010, for the first time, an official from the EU delegation, presented an EU position on Afghanistan at the UNSC” (“The EU Common Foreign and Security Policy in the UN Security Council: *Between Representation and Coordination*”, *European Foreign Affairs Review*, 15, 2010, p. 108).

<sup>10</sup> Firstly, by means of the up to date confidential Discussion Paper “Enhancing EU CSDP Support to UN Peacekeeping Operations” (doc. 5724/11 25.1.2011), which was followed by another one, in this case accessible to the public, entitled “Further possibilities for enhancing EU CSDP support to UN peacekeeping operations, including in the civilian area” (doc. 8719/1/11 REV 1, 29.4.2011). Finally, a third and more operational document, entitled “Actions to enhance EU CSDP support to UN

Shortly before its inception, it was justifiably argued that if the future EEAS “will not include the substantial funding instruments managed by DG DEV and EuropeAid or the ESDP crisis management instruments, it may resemble the UN Department of Political Affairs”, with its rather limited role in peace building and no authority to ensure coordination of the UN system-wide effort<sup>11</sup>. This has indeed not been the outcome of the highly sensitive decision making process leading to the establishment of the Service. Thus, let us see to what extent the EU is now in a better position to develop a stronger partnership with the UN in this field.

### *Towards a more strategically driven relationship*

As in many other areas of its foreign policy, the lack of a clear-cut EU strategy has been pointed out as one of the main weaknesses affecting its cooperation with the UN in international crisis management. This assertion is equally valid for each of the main components of the partnership individually considered and as far as the interaction between them is concerned.

Obviously, the new architecture of EU external action offers fresh grounds to revert that situation. Not only for the unification, as artificial as that may be, under the steering authority of the EU High Representative and the EEAS of almost all instruments relevant in the context of this relationship, but also because of the stability that this institutional design now provides for its redefinition and subsequent implementation.

Although a high degree of dependence on certain key Member States’ political commitment and capabilities will continue to be unavoidable, mostly when CSDP missions are deemed necessary, the end of the rotation system of the presidency of the EU Foreign Affairs Council substantially reduces the margin of influence for exogenous factors in crisis management cooperation with the UN, as has clearly been the case in the past. Good examples of this phenomenon can be easily found in the recent practice of EU interventions in support of or in collaboration with the UN in Africa.

A certain taste of this more strategically driven approach is already apparent, though still to a limited extent, in the first documents produced by the EEAS in this regard. Intended to focus on cooperation channelled through CSDP capabilities, they were originally prepared by its *Crisis Management and Planning Department*, that is to say a CSDP structure. Their perspective is nevertheless quite comprehensive in nature, furthermore taking fully into account developments underway in the framework of the UN system. To this effect, cooperation in the civilian area, for instance, is envisaged in very broad terms, referring not only to the civilian components of UN peacekeeping operations, but also to eventual contributions by the EU to any other UN field missions, mandates or activities, such as special political missions or peace building activities, a range of actions in which the EU has already proved to very active in supporting UN initiatives in the past by way of former EC financial instruments, particularly the Instrument for Stability. Therefore, a smoother and

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peacekeeping” (doc. 17497/11 24.11.2011), has been addressed to the Political and Security Committee.

<sup>11</sup> Catriona Gourlay, *EU-UN Cooperation in Peacebuilding. Partners in Practice?*, United Nations Institute for Disarmament Research, Geneva, 2009, p. 42.

more fruitful interaction between these instruments and CSDP capabilities may reasonably be expected in the future as a common pattern of work with the UN.

As far as concrete modalities of cooperation are concerned, the different options at stake are also presented in a more strategic way, giving a clear priority to what seems to be not only more feasible but also more effective in practice, regardless of its strict benefit for the Union in terms of external visibility. This would explain, in my opinion, the emphasis made in the aforementioned documents on the so called “clearing house” model of support for UN activities<sup>12</sup>, that is to say the EU’s facilitating through different means its Member States’ participation in UN missions or operations, both in the civilian and military fields. This option was successfully put to the test in the case of Haiti after the January 2010 earthquake by setting up a small cell (EUCO Haiti) within the EU Situation Centre in order to coordinate Member States’ temporary police and military contributions to the extremely weakened UN presence in the country. Unlike in the case of CSDP operations, its establishment did not require a long and complex decision making process, ensuring in this way an acceptably rapid and quite integrated EU response. Needless to say that excessive fragmentation on the European side (EC, EU, Member States) has significantly hindered cooperation with the UN in other areas of activity and geographical latitudes, such as the security sector reform initiatives in the DR of Congo or Afghanistan.

Finally, and from a broader perspective, the EU should not underestimate the strategic value of its position as full member with “institutional donor” status within the UN Peace Building Commission (UN PBC), mainly if as a result of the review process undertaken in 2010 current reforms prove to be successful in strengthening the role of this body and of the so called UN Peace Building Architecture as a whole. Understandably neglected in the past because of their extremely limited achievements, these structures may, however, offer in the near future a privileged channel for interaction between the EU and the UN system with regard to countries emerging from conflict.

#### *Reinforcing cooperation at the operational level*

Seen within the context of EU-UN cooperation in crisis management and the ambition of both organisations to improve the effectiveness of their respective policies in this field, the establishment of the EEAS not only represents a major step forward for the EU itself, but it also may appear to a certain extent as a model or inspiration for what the UN is struggling to implement in its own system. Automatic positive effects from this complementarity should, however, not be taken for granted, especially in the current financial situation with EU Member States being more and more reluctant to commit national capabilities in crisis management operations. In other words, although predictable, real progress in the evolution of the EU-UN partnership at this level will largely depend on the ability of the new EU structures effectively to make the most of their enhanced position and that progress is

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<sup>12</sup> A presentation and discussion of the whole range of models of cooperation between the EU and the UN can be found in Thierry Tardy, “UN-EU Relations in Crisis Management. Taking Stock and Looking Ahead”, in *Partnerships, The United Nations, the European Union and the Regional Dimensions of Peace Operations: Examples of Cooperation within the Framework of Chapter VIII of the UN Charter, Challenges Forum Report 2008*, p. 35 (<http://www.challengesforum.org>).

accordingly more likely to be, at least in the immediate future, of a qualitative rather than a quantitative nature.

Two interconnected issues seem particularly relevant in this respect: on the one hand, the new allocation of responsibilities within the EU institutional system regarding the handling of crisis management instruments; on the other, the effective consolidation of what should develop as a stronger and unified leadership for their implementation on the ground.

As far as the first of these issues is concerned, the EEAS has apparently been placed in a suitable position to act as a much more comprehensive and reliable partner for the UN in the field of crisis management, having under “its control” all instruments relevant for this purpose except for humanitarian aid and the external dimension of the European Civil Protection Mechanism, now jointly assigned to a single DG Commission. However, the scope of the powers conferred upon it in relation to each of those instruments differs substantially, as a consequence of the complex political compromise which paved the way for the establishment of the EEAS itself. This is of course the case of CSDP capabilities whose particular status within the EEAS structure and under the direct authority of the EU High Representative is fully preserved, but it is also true for the management of the whole range of former EC external cooperation instruments according to the new pattern of shared responsibility with the Commission provided for in article 9 of the EEAS Decision<sup>13</sup>.

This has led, for instance, to maintaining the original differentiated regime of administration for the two windows of the Instrument for Stability<sup>14</sup>, probably the most prominent EU financial tool for cooperation with the UN in crisis management which has allowed the Commission increasingly to support in the last few years significant initiatives promoted by the UNGS Departments of Political Affairs and Peacekeeping Operations. Although perhaps initially justified in the aforementioned circumstances, that differentiation would seem to make less sense once the EEAS has become fully operational. In this new context, the specific nature of the IfS as an extremely valuable and featured tool to cope with emerging crises, complementing actions taken by means of both classical development or humanitarian instruments and CSDP missions, should not only be preserved but reinvigorated under the exclusive authority of the EEAS. Likewise, entrusted with substantial responsibilities in the programming cycle of all other EU external cooperation instruments, the EEAS should also be able to foster a smoother and more coherent integration among their general objectives of security and peace building concerns: ultimately, nothing which may be deemed at odds with what the Commission is advocating in relation to the future configuration of all these instruments in its first proposals for the new EU’s multiannual financial framework (2014-2020)<sup>15</sup>.

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<sup>13</sup> Council Decision of 26 July 2010 (OJ L 201, 3.8.2010).

<sup>14</sup> “Assistance in response to situations of crisis or emerging crisis” and “Assistance in the context of stable conditions for cooperation”, according to articles 3 and 4, respectively, of Regulation 1717/2006 of 15 November 2006 establishing an Instrument for Stability (OJ L 327, 24.11.2006). The former has so far been in the hands of Commission’s DG RELEX, whereas the latter has been managed by DG DEV.

<sup>15</sup> As stated in *Commission Staff Working Paper. A Budget for Europe 2020: the current system of funding, the challenges ahead, the results of stakeholders consultation and different options on the main horizontal and sectorial issues*, SEC (2011) 868 final, 29.6.2011, in particular p. 209.

The establishment of the EEAS is much less likely to have a similar impact on EU-UN cooperation regarding coordination of CSDP civilian and military capabilities. Although highly desirable and perfectly in tune with reforms underway in the UN system, improvements in that field within the EU are dependent upon other factors over which the EEAS has little or no influence. Any step forward in that direction, like the foreseeable revision of the concept itself and the tasks assigned to the “EU Battlegroups” in order to turn them into a more flexible and effective instrument for crisis management would in any case only benefit EU-UN interaction in this field. Looking backwards, it is worth remembering in this respect how close the link originally was between the emergence of the battlegroup concept and the prospects at that moment for wider cooperation with UN peacekeeping missions mainly in the African continent.

Last, but not least, and as far as the leadership issue is concerned, the new unitary scheme of EU external representation through the impressive network of former Commission delegations in third countries, now embedded within the EEAS structure under the direct authority of EU High Representative, might equally contribute to enhancing cooperation with the UN in crisis management scenarios. The parallelism with the UN operational model, based to a greater extent on the autonomy and the political steering role of SG Special Representatives, certainly seems promising in this new context. Nevertheless, a real and very consistent leadership throughout all EEAS’ levels and departments will be required for that to become true. Otherwise, it would not be possible to avoid the persistence of the double chain of command which has so far accompanied the deployment of the EU’s crisis management instruments, hindering its potential for cooperation with other actors in a more comprehensive way. Effectively making the most of figures like the *Managing Director for Crisis Response and Operational Coordination* as a key position in this respect at the EEAS’ headquarters in Brussels, or that of double-hatted EU Special Representatives and Heads of Delegations on the ground, recently joined by the new one of “Senior Coordinators” for particularly sensitive regions<sup>16</sup>, will be of the utmost importance for that purpose.

### **Concluding recommendations**

Both for the moment at which they have emerged and because of their general orientation, reforms introduced by the Lisbon Treaty in the field of EU external action provide an excellent window of opportunity to enhance cooperation with the UN in international crisis management. As a crucial component of its commitment to effective multilateralism, the EU’s aim in this process should be to define a more balanced, comprehensive, and fit for purpose pattern of cooperation, bearing fully in mind parallel changes underway within the UN system. To this effect, a certain number of recommendations may be put forward:

- Firstly, *it should be conceived from the outset as a comprehensive process, embracing the whole range of EU instruments potentially involved in crisis*

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<sup>16</sup> On 31 October 2011 Koen Vervaeke, EEAS’ Director for the Horn of Africa, East and Southern Africa and the Indian Ocean, was appointed Senior Coordinator for the Great Lakes region (Uganda, Rwanda, Burundi and DRC) with a mandate to “work closely with the EU Delegations and the European Commission and EU member states to advance our objectives of peace and prosperity in the region as a whole, and stabilisation and reconstruction in the areas most affected by conflict” (A 437/11).



management cooperation with the UN, and not only CSDP capabilities. To a greater or lesser extent most of them are now under the direct responsibility of the EEAS and this should make a significant difference in the way the EU interacts with the UN in peacekeeping and peace building activities, adding value in terms of coherence and thus fostering a truly comprehensive partnership between them.

- Although a more strategic approach on the part of the EU is required all across the board, it seems particularly necessary when dealing with the most sensitive and scarce resources, that is to say CSDP capabilities. In order to avoid past disappointments and a certain feeling of frustration due to the gap between expectations and achievements, *models of cooperation involving those capabilities should be better characterised and prioritised* according to the value added the EU may effectively offer to the UN through each of them. Without rejecting any concrete pattern of cooperation, this could amount to recognising that in many cases the EU should confine itself to act as a facilitator of Member States' contributions to UN missions.
- In seeking to promote a more balanced and coherent partnership with the UN in the field of international crisis management, *the EU Instrument for Stability will continue to play a capital role*. Therefore, its specific nature as a featured tool to cope with emerging crises or situations which might lead to them, complementing actions taken by means of both classical development or humanitarian instruments and CSDP missions, should not only be preserved but reinvigorated under the exclusive authority of the EU High Representative and the EEAS.
- Finally, for this more integrated new institutional and organisational design to really have a positive impact on EU-UN cooperation, it will be essential that an *effective single chain of command* in steering all available EU instruments for crisis management could develop and be consolidated in practice. The tools are there but now they must be made the most of in a suitable and consistent way. The same leadership will be required to keep up the momentum in bringing the process of reconfiguration of the EU-UN partnership to a successful conclusion and in ensuring its subsequent implementation.

The Diplomatic System of the EU Network, funded by the European Commission's Jean Monnet Programme, brings together three partner universities with a strong tradition in the study of European integration in its international context. The lead partner is Loughborough University, and specifically its Department of Politics, History and International Relations and Centre for the Study of International Governance. The other partners are Katholieke Universiteit Leuven, from Belgium, and Maastricht University, from the Netherlands. Each partner is responsible for key events and a research strand. In addition selected experts drawn from EU and Member State institutions and from relevant sections of civil society will be invited to participate in selected network activities.

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