

## **FOOD FOR THOUGHT PAPER**

### **A PROPOSAL FROM THE MINISTERS OF DEFENCE OF**

### **IRELAND, AUSTRIA, SWEDEN, NETHERLANDS AND BELGIUM**

#### **Increasing the Contribution of EU Member States to UN Peacekeeping**

This paper represents the beginning of a consultative and discursive process as to how EU member States can together collaborate and coordinate their efforts on UN Peacekeeping contributions in support of the recently endorsed EU-UN Strategic Priorities on Peace Operations and Crisis Management (2019-2021).

The development of a strong and enduring partnership between the EU and the UN is critical in the face of ongoing and increasing and more complex global crises requiring a multifaceted response.

Since the EU-UN Joint Declaration of September 2003, the two institutions have progressively developed and institutionalised their partnership in ways unmatched by other organisations. The depth of this partnership was reflected in the agreement between both bodies entitled “Strengthening the UN-EU Strategic Partnership on Peacekeeping and Crisis Management: Priorities 2015-2018 which has now been updated to cover the period 2019-2021. These updated priorities were formally welcomed in Council Conclusions and through a joint UN-EU press statement in September 2018<sup>1</sup>.

Ongoing engagement between the EEAS and DPKO reflects the importance of this relationship and the commitment of the EU to support the UN, within means and capabilities, across the full spectrum of crisis prevention, crisis management, peacekeeping and post-conflict stabilisation operations. In addition, there is increasing coordination between CSDP and UN operations on the ground, either where both organisations operate in parallel, or sequentially.

While institutional cooperation continues to develop, at the level of EU member states, there is also an increasing engagement in recent years to contribute to UN peacekeeping operations. While numbers remain modest in Africa, UNIFIL, the UN operation in Lebanon, is well supported with significant contributions of troops and capabilities by EU member States. Since 2015, MINUSMA, the UN Mission in Mali has also been a focus for the increasing commitment by EU member States to on the ground forces in support of UN Blue Hat operations.

In Vancouver, in November, 2017, at the UN Peacekeeping Defence Ministerial Conference, EU Member States made further pledges of capabilities and capacity development in

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<sup>1</sup> <https://peacekeeping.un.org/en/reinforcing-un-eu-strategic-partnership-peace-operations-and-crisis-management-priorities-2019-2021>

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support of the UN. While these developments are welcome, there is the potential to provide for greater coordination of EU member State contributions in this regard and also to support those EU member States who are already contributing to UN Missions. This is not to negate, the contribution which the EU and its member States provide through their participation in EU Training Missions, which indirectly support UN objectives by training local national forces in order to prepare nations to take responsibility for their own security and to be able to replace UN contributions/missions. EUTM are consequently important, in capacity building thus facilitating a UN exit strategy.

Priority 4 of the EU-UN Strategic Partnership on Peace Operations and Crisis Management (2019-2021) is targeted at Facilitating EU Member States' Contributions to UN Peacekeeping Operations.

However, while action continues to be taken in sensitising EU member States to UN requirements, there is little structured dialogue among the member States bilaterally, multilaterally or within the institutional framework of the EU and CSDP on the consideration or planning of member States in responding to UN peacekeeping requirements and commitments. Indeed, more or less all such discussion occurs at the member State level bilaterally with the UN. Decisions to contribute to UN missions and to withdraw from UN missions are taken at the national level with little if any discussion or coordination at an EU Level among member States who are TCCs.

A more structured dialogue at EU level, which would allow for greater coordination and support for those EU member States contributing to UN missions, may facilitate enhanced contributions from other EU member States and better planned contributions to such missions or may enable more effective activation of the pledges made to UN Peacekeeping in Vancouver and at previous summits. Such a dialogue would also directly respond to deliver the UN Action for Peacekeeping (A4P) initiative, which calls for enhanced partnerships.

A key concern expressed by EU member States contributing to UN missions has been the inability to actively manage the rotation of national contributions into and out of UN missions over limited periods. Once a commitment is made to a UN mission and the contingent is deployed, it is inherently difficult to exit the mission, in particular where a State is contributing key enablers or higher-end capabilities and enablers such as Special Operation Forces, critical air contingents, technical capacity and rapidly deployable response elements. This is primarily due to the difficulty the UN has in sourcing replacements for such capabilities from other UN troop contributing countries (TCCs). As a result, the UN ends up in a vicious circle whereby potential TCCs will not commit enablers, personnel or capabilities as they feel they can never exit an operation and the lack of such enablers undermines the effectiveness and capacity of UN operations making them unattractive for potential EU TCCs.

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It is considered that enhanced coordination and transparency among EU member state TCCs and potential TCCs in terms of current and future contributions to UN Missions, involving an agreed and structured contingent “rotation cycle”, could help alleviate this problem and enhance support from EU member States to UN missions. Such a rotation system could also help to enhance the performance and impact of UN peacekeeping operations in line with the Declaration of Shared Commitments on UN Peacekeeping Operations signed by leaders at a high level meeting at the UN General Assembly on 25 September in line with the UN Secretary-General’s action for peacekeeping (A4P) initiative. This coordination could extend across two dimensions, coordinating *multinational rotational contributions* (i.e contributions comprising national or multination contributions in a sequence replacing each other) and *multinational contributions* (i.e. contributions by several nations to deliver a contingent or capability within the same time period) while giving due regard to differing legal and logistical requirements of each.

The development of a “rotation cycle” among EU member states in support of the UN could be a key enabler in this regard. The rotation cycle could build on already successful informal EU rotations to UN peacekeeping operations such as the rotation of C-130s within a multinational rotation system with Belgium, Norway, Sweden, Denmark and Portugal.

Such a rotation cycle should operate on the basis of advance planning among interested TCCs in the planning and conduct of such operations. Member States could indicate, in a six-monthly return, its future plans for possible commitment to UN missions. A member State may for example indicate that it is considering deploying a capability to a particular UN mission for a specific period, depending on the nature of that specific contribution. In the case of on the ground personnel it may be a number of years, while in respect of higher end capabilities it may be much shorter in terms of deployment duration. The process would require close and detailed engagement with the UN, In particular with the UN *Strategic Force Generation Cell (SFG)* and *Force Generation Service (FGS)*), in order for the UN to be able to accommodate multinational contributions. In that regard, the UN should be centrally involved at an early stage and throughout the whole process in order to ensure that all legal, political and financial issues are considered and comprehensively addressed.

Discussions, facilitated by the EEAS and the UN but with member States in the lead, could be held among the member States in terms of potential support which may be required by a member State in order to commit to a UN deployment. This could include another member State providing additional personnel or capabilities in support of that member State. More importantly it could allow for commitment by other member States who would agree to replace a member State contingent when they complete their say four year deployment as part of the rotation cycle. The process should avoid creating an additional administrative burden on member States or give rise to financial consequences. Rather, by providing greater transparency, the process should identify opportunities for coordination and collaboration, thus contributing to greater efficiencies and overall effectiveness.

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In the context of the Vancouver and previous similar summit commitments to peacekeeping capacity building in third States, it would also allow for discussion on coordinated activation of those commitments, including jointly among groups of member States where there are common interests.



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19<sup>th</sup> November, 2018, Brussels.