



8 March 2021

CO-OPERATION BETWEEN THE UNITED NATIONS AND THE COUNCIL OF EUROPE

I.

The relations between the Council of Europe and the United Nations are based on the Agreement between the Secretariat General of the Council of Europe and the Secretariat of the United Nations signed as early as 15 December 1951 and the [Arrangements on Co-operation and Liaison between the Secretariats of the Council of Europe and the United Nations \(Exchange of letters of 19 November 1971\)](#).

In its Resolution 44/6 of 17 October 1989, the General Assembly of the United Nations granted the Council of Europe a standing invitation to participate as an **observer** in its sessions and work.

Since 2000 (every second year since 2004), the General Assembly of the United Nations, within its debate on co-operation with regional and other organisations, adopts a Resolution on co-operation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe. A draft of such a Resolution is prepared and adopted by the Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg. The CM Chair is then asked to table the draft with the UN in New York and to hold the necessary consultations towards its adoption by the UNGA, preferably without vote. The latest resolution was adopted by the UN General Assembly on 3 March 2021 without a vote (doc. A/RES/75/264). Next draft Resolution will be on the agenda of the Committee of Ministers in 2022 for adoption by the UNGA in September-December 2022.

II.

The United Nations is a major partner for the Council of Europe and an ideal platform for global outreach. The universality of values shared by the member states of the Council of Europe constitutes the basis for co-operation. Due to its global nature, both in thematic and geographical terms, the UN constitutes an “across the board” partner for the Council of Europe.

For the UN, the Council of Europe is “*instrumental in advancing the principles of democracy and human rights in Europe. I commend the robust efforts of the Council to support citizens across the continent, and I thank you for your clear stance in support of human rights....*”¹.

The mutual interest in co-operation is reflected in regular contacts, consultations and dialogue between the Secretaries General (the latest in September 2019 in New York) and the Deputy

¹ Letter of 2 December 2016 of UN SG Ban Ki-Moon to CoE SG.

Secretaries General and the UN Under-Secretaries General about current political or thematic issues.

The Council of Europe works closely with a large number of UN bodies, including the UNHCR², OHCHR³, UNICEF⁴, OCHA⁵, UNDP⁶, UNECE⁷, UNESCO⁸ and the World Bank.

The relations between both organisations are focused on, but not limited to human rights in a broad sense. Emphasis is given to co-operation with the Human Rights Council, in particular in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review (UPR) to which the Council of Europe contributes actively as regards the human rights situation in its member states.

The UN is also involved in promoting accession of Council of Europe non-member states to the Council of Europe conventions with a global vocation (for example, the Council of Europe Conventions on action against trafficking in human beings, on preventing and combating violence against women and domestic violence, on cybercrime, etc) or supporting their implementation.

Since their opening, respectively in 2010 and 2011, the Council of Europe Offices in Geneva and Vienna, acting as Permanent Delegations to the UN Offices in both cities, strongly contributed to the enhancement of relations with the UN, as well as to the increased visibility of the Council of Europe amongst UN member states.

III.

Among the many recent examples of CoE-UN co-operation, the following could be mentioned as illustrating the multifaceted relations between the two organisations:

- Council of Europe contribution to the implementation of the **2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development**; in particular, the Council of Europe participated on 18 September 2020 in the online meeting of the Inter-Regional Dialogue on Democracy (IRDD) on “Reinventing the Role of International and Regional Organisations in Promoting Peaceful, Just and Inclusive Institutions in Times of Crisis”. Moreover, the Council of Europe has created a specific website devoted to its contribution to implementation of 2030 Agenda: <https://www.coe.int/en/web/un-agenda-2030/home> . This website is regularly updated;
- Increased involvement of the Council of Europe in the **Universal Periodic Review**, in particular through the regular participation of its Permanent Observer to the United Nations Office at Geneva in the meetings of the Human Rights Council and through increased references to CoE texts in the latter’s reports on Council of Europe member states; in this framework, good practices are being developed, such as the uploading of the Council of Europe’s contributions on the OHCHR’s on-line submission system;
- Increased co-operation in the field of **human rights**, demonstrated by the signature on 26 September 2013 in New York by the Secretary General of the Council of Europe and

² United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees

³ Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights

⁴ United Nations Children’s Fund

⁵ United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs

⁶ United Nations Development Programme

⁷ United Nations Economic Commission for Europe

⁸ United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

- the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights of **the Joint Declaration on the reinforcement of co-operation between the Council of Europe Secretariat and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights**. The implementation of the Joint Declaration is illustrated, for example, by regularly holding (in Strasbourg and Geneva alternately) a CoE/OHCHR co-ordination meeting. Furthermore, the Commissioner for Human Rights of the Council of Europe maintains regular contacts, *inter alia*, with the OHCHR and met the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights in 2019 and 2020;
- Increased co-operation with the **Human Rights Council**, demonstrated in particular by the addresses of the consecutive Presidents of the Human Rights Council, like Ambassador Elisabeth Tichy-Fisslberger (Austria 2020) and Ambassador Nazhat Shameem Khan (Fiji 2021) to the annual exchanges of views of the Committee of Ministers of the Council of Europe with experts from capitals on human rights and the United Nations, as well as by the address of the Secretary General of the Council of Europe at the High-Level Segment of the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva on 25 February 2020;
 - The Council of Europe's regular participation in the annual sessions of the **UN Commission on the Status of Women**, the organisation of side events on that occasion and the presentation of key note speeches confirm high-level, pragmatic and target-oriented relations with the UN Women;
 - The interest shown by the Council of Europe in the **Inter-Agency Co-ordination Group against Trafficking in Persons (ICAT)**, followed by the granting of the ICAT Partner Status on 15 September 2017;
 - Synergies developed in the **fight against terrorism**, recently illustrated by the participation of the CoE in the 2018 special meeting on "Security Council Resolution 2396 (2017): review of the Madrid Guiding Principles". Council of Europe Secretariat also has regular meetings with counterparts in the UN Counter-Terrorism Executive Directorate;
 - Increased co-operation in the field of **democracy**, demonstrated by the contribution to the UN efforts to promote and consolidate new or restored democracies or by regular UN participation in the Council of Europe World Forum for Democracy, starting with the keynote address by the UN SG at the opening of the first World Forum for Democracy in Strasbourg (October 2012);
 - Regular co-operation between the **Pompidou Group and UNODC**;
 - The co-operation with **UNDP in the field of local and regional democracy**;
 - Increased co-operation between the Council of Europe and **UNESCO** in the field of **Artificial Intelligence**, demonstrated by the participation of the Assistant Director-General for Communication and Information of UNESCO in the conference "AI: mastering the rules of the game" organised by the Council of Europe, together with the Finnish Presidency of the Committee of Ministers on 26 and 27 February 2019 in Helsinki, and the participation of the Deputy Secretary General of the Council of Europe in the high-level conference organised on 4 March 2019 in Paris by UNESCO, "Principles for Artificial Intelligence: Towards a Humanist Approach?";
 - Increased co-operation between the **Secretariat of the United Nations** and the **Secretariat of the Council of Europe**, demonstrated by regular exchanges of views and the development of best practices such as teleconferences between the Director of the Europe Division of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs and the Director of Political Affairs of the Council of Europe, as well as visits of members of the Europe Division of the United Nations Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs at Council of Europe's Headquarters (latest one in December 2019) co-ordinated by the Council of Europe's Directorate of External Relations;

- Increased cooperation in the field of **migration and refugees**, as shown in particular by:
- the bilateral meeting in Geneva in October 2018 between the Special Representative of the Secretary General of the CoE on Migration and Refugees and the Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations on International Migration in the margins of the IOM International Dialogue on Migration, and the participation of the Special Representative of the Secretary General in the Intergovernmental Conference held in Marrakech on 10 and 11 December 2018 to adopt the Global Compact for Safe, Orderly and Regular Migration;
- the participation in the 70th EXCOM of the Programme of the High Commissioner for Refugees - devoted to statelessness - in Geneva from 7 to 11 October 2019;
- the participation in the first Global Refugee Forum (Geneva, 16-18 December 2019) where the CoE, in particular, presented at a side event the European Qualifications Passport for Refugees (EQPR).