

Address by Donald Tusk, President of the European Council
to the 72nd United Nations General Assembly
New York, 20 September 2017

Mr President,
Mr Secretary General,
Excellencies,
Ladies and gentlemen,

The European Union stands for freedom and a credible rules-based global order. Because this order is a real *sine qua non* condition for peace, stability and a global economy that works for everyone. An alternative to this order is chaos which always encourages violence, egoism and extremisms.

The United Nations is the best tool we have to address, on a global scale, today's conflicts, famine, forced displacement, terrorism, and a return to nuclear tensions. For the EU and its Member States, it is imperative that the UN rise to these challenges. This is why together we contribute approximately one third of UN core financing, make one third of UN peacekeeping contributions, and put in half of all voluntary contributions to UN funds and programmes.

But we also expect the UN to become a more energetic, and a less bureaucratic organisation that can act with clarity and purpose in all its actions. Therefore, the EU considers the reform ideas of the UN currently on the table as the necessary minimum. What is needed is more ambition, not less.

The UN remains a vital forum to debate and a tool to implement our collective will, even if it has declined in popular esteem in recent years. I take the action by the UN Security Council on 11 September to sanction North Korea for carrying out more nuclear testing as a sign that the capacity for real leadership and unity is present. But it is still too little. No country should be allowed to undermine the global non-proliferation regime or to threaten peaceful countries. The European Union calls together with Japan and South Korea, our close friends and strategic partners, for a peaceful denuclearisation of the Korean peninsula. And we also call on all concerned to uphold the Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action with Iran as a multilateral deal that is delivering more security for us all.

Europe also wants to work in partnership with African countries on challenges ranging from security and counter-terrorism to economic growth and job creation. We look forward to advancing these goals together at the African-European summit in Ivory Coast at the end of November. The European Union is already co-operating closely with UN missions on peacekeeping and conflict prevention in Mali, in the Central African Republic and other conflict zones. And we are also doing our best to alleviate a major humanitarian crisis, affecting more than 20 million people, in the Lake Chad Basin, South Sudan and Somalia. But more needs to be done. Now is the time to wake up to these escalating situations before it is really too late.

When it comes to the global refugee crisis, the EU continues to assume its responsibility. By receiving people in need of protection. By assisting host countries closer to the conflict zones. For three years now, the EU has appealed to the international community to take its responsibility for refugee protection and irregular migration. I am doing the same today.

In that context, the European Union is actively supporting the United Nations process to develop Global Compacts on Refugees and on Regular, Safe and Orderly Migration. Your engagement is needed right now, both in terms of money for humanitarian assistance, and more resettlement for those displaced by conflicts in Syria, Yemen, Myanmar, and especially across Africa.

At the same time, we should crack down on human smugglers that exploit vulnerable people and violate sovereign borders. I welcome that the International Criminal Court prosecutor is investigating the smugglers in Libya for crimes against humanity. We should treat them via a system of international sanctions just as harshly as those engaged in terrorism and piracy. The European Union calls on the international agencies to increase their presence on the ground in Libya immediately, so that we can work to improve the situation of those victimised by the smugglers.

2016 showed us that Da'esh as a territorial entity is fated for defeat. That's good news. Sadly however, repeated terrorist attacks, also in Europe, demonstrate that the threat continues. So, we need to keep on strengthening the global fight against terrorism and violent extremism. In short, we must be more determined than they are.

Doing more on counter-radicalisation within the UN is badly needed. We welcome the establishment by the industry of the Global Internet Counter-Terrorism Forum to work in tandem with UN structures. The European Union has called on the major online companies to develop, as a priority, the means for automatic deletion of extremist content immediately after posting. And to the Muslim leaders of the world, I repeat the appeal I made after the London Bridge attack in June: your strong stance against Islamist extremism will be a real support in the fight against terrorism.

And finally on climate change. The Paris Agreement is the cornerstone of global efforts to tackle in an effective way climate change and implement the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development. The EU remains determined to implement the Agreement swiftly and fully, and to support our partners, in particular the vulnerable countries, in the fight against climate change. We will work with all partners who share our conviction that the Agreement is necessary to protect our planet, that it is fit for purpose. And that, in turn, it is good for economic growth and future jobs.

We meet at a time when the world is poised between hope and fear. The global economy and trade are expanding, but security tensions are rising and global co-operation is being increasingly questioned. Making international action robust, credible and transformative is the challenge. The European Union will never give up working with and within the United Nations until we meet this challenge.

The European Union and the United Nations were created in answer to the atrocities of the Second World War. This is why our European priority will always be to vigorously react against evil, violence and lawlessness in the international life. In confrontation with evil, the EU and the UN can not hesitate.

In our political life there are situations that are black and white, that are crystal clear, like in the case of the North Korea's nuclear blackmail, terrorism, or the aggression on Ukraine. And it is then when we need to demonstrate that we are still able to distinguish between good and evil. Sometimes this takes courage. But the UN is not there to cowardly look for a compromise with the evil, but to mobilise the global community in the fight against it. Therefore, a moral judgement of the reality, clear and univocal, should be the first principle of our common action.

Many people in the world still believe that in this room have gathered those who have not given up on the ethical dimension of politics in the name of their own egoistic interests. Let us show them that their trust is justified.

Thank you.
