

# UN Brussels Team : Our joint engagement with EU institutions

The United Nations (UN) and the European Union (EU) are working together in most countries around the world, promoting the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), human rights, and humanitarian action. The EU is committed to multilateralism with a strong United Nations at its core. In view of multiple crises and large-scale challenges affecting sustainable development, a solid partnership between the UN and the EU is more important than ever.

## Who are we?

The UN Brussels Team (UNBT) is a global expert knowledge hub on EU-UN relations. It brings together 30 UN entities/offices, of which 26 are based in Belgium.<sup>1</sup> The team is led by the Director of the UN/UNDP Office in Brussels and Representative of the UN System in the EU, a position currently held by Ms. Camilla Brückner. The UNBT brings forward the UN's impartial mandate, its extensive country presence, its trusted relationships with governments, its normative role and convening capacity. It represents an extensive expertise across the pillars of the UN.

## How do we function?

The 30 UN entities/offices coordinate their common work vis-à-vis the EU. Together, they work to present a unified voice to the EU and the Belgian Government. The team works to build understanding and support for UN System activities and global agendas both within the EU institutions and amongst a wider public in Europe. Additionally, the UNBT provides regular support to UNHQ (NY, Geneva and other locations), UN Resident Coordinators (RCs) and UN Country Teams (UNCTs), as well as other UN bodies, seeking to facilitate a coherent engagement of the UN system with the EU. This includes policy engagement, advocacy, resource mobilisation, coordination around contractual issues through the Financial and Administrative Framework Agreement (FAFA) and in some cases programmatic engagement.

## Who are our main counterparts?

Partners of the UNBT include the European Commission (EC), the European External Action Service (EEAS), the Council of the EU, the European Parliament (EP) and various EU bodies; as well as the Belgian Government, the Organisation of African, Caribbean and Pacific States (OACPS), Member State Permanent Representations to the EU, civil society organizations, non-governmental organizations, think tanks, academia and several other actors in Brussels.

## Examples of engagements

With support from the UNBT, the UN and the EU engage regularly through

- (1) yearly **EC-UN high-level dialogues**, bringing together the UN Secretary-General and the EC President along with their teams;
- (2) the annual meeting between the **Secretary-General and the European Council**;
- (3) **annual sustainable development dialogues** between the United Nations Deputy Secretary-General and the EU Commissioner for International Partnerships to take stock of progress of the partnership to advance the SDGs and related aspects of Our Common Agenda
- (4) regular visits by **UN principals, UN RCs and other high-level representatives** meeting with EU senior officials;
- (5) cooperation with the EU on global summits, e.g. UNGA, HLPF, COP, upcoming Summit of the Future;

<sup>1</sup> These include: OSRSG CAAC, FAO, IFAD, ILO, IOM, ITU\*, OHCHR, UN Women, UNDP, UNDRR, UNECE\*, UNEP, UNESCO, UNFPA, UN-Habitat, UNHCR, UNICEF, UNIDO, UNCDF, UNICRI, UNODC, UNOPS, UNRIC, UNITAR, UNRWA, UNU/MERIT/CRIS\*, UNWTO\*, WFP, WHO, World Bank. Entities with \* are located outside of Belgium but are members of the UNBT. The offices of the UNBT members have different mandates, size, scope, and location. Some offices are Regional Offices for Europe (e.g. IOM) and also manage their organization's dialogue with the EU. Some other offices are EU/Belgium/ACP liaison offices. Some offices run programmes implemented in Europe and beyond.



- (6) regular meetings at the strategic and **technical level** between UNBT and the EU;
- (7) participation to and organisation of **public events** in Brussels, e.g. with the European Parliament;
- (8) **support to country/regional dialogues** and policy/programme cooperation between RCs/UNCTs and EU Delegations;
- (9) regular engagement in the context of **FAFA**.

## UNBT Working Groups and Task Forces

The UN in Brussels coordinates its thematic engagement with the EU through working groups and task forces.<sup>2</sup> They all work to advance key EU-UN priorities by entertaining a regular policy discussion with the EU, for example through thematic dialogues and joint UN position papers. In total, there are eight interagency groups, each chaired by one or several UN entities.

- **Working Group on the European Green Deal** (FAO, UNEP) coordinates engagement with the EU on the Green Deal.
- **Working Group on Digitalisation for the SDGs** (ITU, UNESCO) works to achieve a common reading of EU policies and advocate for joint UN positions on digital issues.
- **Working Group on Youth** (UNEP, UNECE) encourages interagency collaboration on youth including youth engagement in policymaking processes, green skills, and youth, peace and security.
- **Working Group on Gender Equality** (UN Women, UNFPA) works to ensure coordination on women's empowerment and gender equality issues and provides a forum for information sharing.
- **Working Group on the FAFA** is set up to align the UN and the EU on the contractual, administrative and financial aspects of the partnership.
- **Task Force on Transition to the new EU political cycle 2024-2029** (European Parliament Elections and new Commission) (UNDRR, UNEP, UNICEF) is set up to prepare UNBT for the new political cycle following the June 2024 European elections.
- **Task Force on the Global Gateway (GG)** and **Team Europe Initiatives (TEIs)** (DCO, UNDP) seeks to identify key entry points to strengthen the EU-UN synergies in GG flagship projects and TEIs, with a special focus on the country level.
- **UN Communications Group** (UNRIC) brings together UN communication specialists to share information, engage jointly with the EU and align on strategic UN communication priorities such as mobilizing climate action, responding to crisis and conflict, achieving multilateral system reform; and the UN's three core pillars of sustainable development, peace and security, and human rights. All of our communications work will be underpinned by a focus on promoting information integrity.

## Priorities for 2024

The UNBT, through its various working groups and task forces, will continue to engage with all EU institutions and the rotating Presidencies of the Council of the EU:

- ✓ To promote multilateralism and global solidarity, in line with the themes of the September 2024 Summit of the Future.
- ✓ To further human rights, gender equality, youth engagement and the rule of law, and promote the overall approach of Leaving No One Behind of the 2030 Agenda.
- ✓ To contribute with normative and technical expertise to EU policy, legislation, and practice, with special emphasis on EU's external action.
- ✓ To define and/or strengthen areas of shared EU-UN interest across a wide range of programmatic and policy issues (e.g. addressing the triple planetary crises).
- ✓ To support the EU-UN cooperation at country level, with special attention on strengthening strategic collaboration for SDG acceleration.
- ✓ To facilitate strategic engagement of the wider UN system with EU institutions.
- ✓ To raise awareness with broader audiences of EU-UN cooperation and effective multilateralism.

<sup>2</sup> Working groups are standing groups set up to address longer-term issues while task forces are designed to deal with specific assignments of either a technical or organisational nature with a fixed-term mandate.