

THE PRESIDENT OF THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY LE PRESIDENT DE L'ASSEMBLEE GENERALE

5 June 2004

Rt. Rev Clemens Lashofer, Madam Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Governor, Madam President

I submit, however, that the European Union's influence at the United Nations and in the international community has much to do with its standing in the world and its approach and contribution to the goals and objectives of the United Nations Charter. It is a widely shared view at the United Nations that the European Union understands that enlightened self-interest is implicit in multilateralism, and this is demonstrated by its strong support for the organization. Taken together, EU member states are the largest financial contributor to the United Nations system, accounting for some 28% of the United Nations regular budget, and about one half of all United Nations member state contributions to Funds and Programmes. The European Union is therefore acknowledged for its invaluable contribution to the essential work of the United Nations.

The European Union has also shown a keen appreciation of the multifaceted approaches that must be taken to development, if the social progress and better standards of life inscribed in the Charter are to be realized. How to achieve sustainable development is, indeed, one of the critical issues with which developing countries are grappling today. The European Union has earned high regard, particularly among developing countries, as the collective contributor of over one half of the world's official development assistance (ODA). Its decision to collectively raise ODA levels to 0.39% of GNI by 2006, as a first step towards the 0.7% United Nations goal, has been greeted with keen appreciation by developing countries.

ODA constitutes an important catalyst for sustainable development policies and programmes in the developing world. Therefore, developing countries continue to look to the European Union as partners in financing for development, and other initiatives to implement the outcomes of the last ten decades of United Nations summits and conferences in the economic and social fields.

Regarding trade, another critical issue on the international agenda, the importance of the European Union's twenty-five states membership as the largest trading entity in the world cannot be overstated. As globalization and trade liberalization continue to dramatically change the world economic order, threatening to marginalize numerous developing countries, many are looking to the European Union to help resolve some of the thorny problems in this area. Problems such as agricultural subsidies, market access, capacity building and special and differential treatment are all desperately in need of resolution. Developing countries are convinced that there is no substitute for a fair and equitable global trading system. The European Union is seen as critical to achieving this objective.

Socio-economic development or lack thereof can be the underside of conflict and strife, and indeed of the many conflicts that engage the attention of the international community in Africa, Asia, Latin America and Europe. The European Union has demonstrated its commitment to conflict prevention and resolution as well as post conflict peace building by the priority it has attached to these issues.

The European Union plays an important role in collective security in line with the United Nations Charter. It meets some 40% of the United Nations peacekeeping budget, and its state members are exemplary for their contribution of troops for United Nations peacekeeping operations. I was

pleased to receive a briefing just two days ago from the Austrian Presidency of SHIRBRIG, the Multinational Stand-by High Readiness Brigade for United Nations Operations.

The European Union is to be commended for its commitment to improving United Nations conflict prevention and peace-keeping capacity through the SHIRBRIG initiative. The EU is also highly regarded for its support, not only of the Charter but also of international law. Drawing on its common foreign and security policy, the European Union membership has been able to speak with one voice, in providing leadership in such critical areas as the Kyoto Protocol, the International Criminal Court, and in matters relating to the International Conference on Financing for Development.

In the General Assembly, the European Union has been consistent in seeking to negotiate consensus on myriad issues on the international agenda. The European Union has been particularly effective in negotiations of fractious and difficult resolutions, emphasizing that the interest of all sides are best served by cooperation rather than confrontation. This has been particularly so in resolutions on the Middle East. Here, The EU has consistently sought to play the role of "honest broker". Cooperation between the European Union and concerned states has resulted in texts that have permitted the vast majority of UN Member States to rally behind positions of policy and principle.

together with the support I have received from other Member States and groups that has helped us to keep a perspective on just how relevant the United Nations is.

It is this cooperation and support that has helped us in our continuing efforts to strike the right balance between development and peace and security so as to address critical issues such as poverty and debt, deadly diseases such as HIV/AIDS, to implement the outcomes of summits and conferences in the economic and social fields and the Millennium Development Goals, the situation in Iraq, the crisis engulfing the Middle East, revitalization of the work of the General Assembly and reform of the Security Council and other critical issues on the international agenda. In short, the issues that, as United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan remarked have brought the organization, "to a fork in the road".

We know there are many challenges the European Union will have to take up as it continues to enlarge its membership. But we know also that we will be able to count on members of the European Union, both individually and collectively, to play a crucial role at the United Nations, and on the world stage. The world needs the European Union's constructive engagement now, more than ever before.

I thank you.