

Information Documents

SG/Inf(2024)38

5 December 2024¹

Establishment of a Council of Europe Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York

¹ This document has been classified restricted at the date of issue; it will be declassified in accordance with Resolution Res(2001)6 on access to Council of Europe documents.

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I. Background: overview of relations between the Council of Europe and the United Nations

1. The Council of Europe has well-established and increasingly solid relations with the United Nations. These started formally on **15 December 1951** with an “Agreement between the Secretariat-General of the Council of Europe and the Secretariat of the United Nations”. This Agreement was then **updated on 19 November 1971** through the “Arrangements on Co-operation and Liaison between the Secretariats of the Council of Europe and of the United Nations”. These relations have expanded to include several agreements and working arrangements with several United Nations bodies, agencies and specialised agencies.²

2. On 17 October 1989, the United Nations **General Assembly** adopted a Resolution³ which granted **observer status** for the Council of Europe in the General Assembly. Consequently, the Council of Europe is invited to participate in the sessions and work of the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA).

3. Since 2000 (every second year since 2004), the UNGA adopts a **Resolution on cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe**. These resolutions demonstrate that co-operation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe is well established in a large number of areas. A draft of this resolution is prepared and adopted by the Committee of Ministers in Strasbourg. The Presidency of the Committee of Ministers is then invited to table the draft with the United Nations in New York and to hold the necessary consultations in view of its adoption by the UNGA.⁴

4. The United Nations is a major partner for the Council of Europe and an ideal platform for **global outreach**. Co-operation is based on the universality of shared values. Due to its global nature, both in thematic and geographical terms, the United Nations constitutes an “across the board” partner for the Council of Europe. This feature has been further strengthened in the context of the **Agenda 2030-Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs)**. With its global and overarching political approach, the United Nations Agenda 2030 has been highly relevant for the Council of Europe. While recognising that the main responsibility for the **implementation** of Agenda 2030 lies with member states, the Council of Europe’s role as an international organisation is to **assist member states and facilitate their contribution to the SDGs’ implementation**. In particular, the Council of Europe, through its instruments, can contribute to the national implementation reporting by member states, and several member states have referred to their work in the Council of Europe in their national reporting. For that purpose, the Council of Europe created a **website**⁵ which is frequently updated – to assist member states in drawing on the Organisation’s work in the preparation of the national reviews to illustrate that their membership of the Council of Europe also contributes to their national implementation of Agenda 2030.

² Such as the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), the United Nations Office for the Co-ordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA), the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) etc.

³ [A/RES/44/6](#)

⁴ The latest resolution was adopted by the UNGA at its 77th session on 26 April 2023, while the latest draft was approved by the Ministers’ Deputies in September 2024 and is currently in New York where it is handled by the Presidency of the Committee of Ministers.

⁵ [Home - Council of Europe Contribution to the United Nations 2030 agenda for sustainable development goals.](#)

5. Since their opening, respectively in 2010 and 2011, the **Council of Europe Offices in Geneva⁶ and Vienna⁷**, acting as Permanent Delegations to the United Nations Offices in both cities, have strongly contributed to the enhancement of relations with the United Nations, as well as to the increased visibility of the Council of Europe amongst United Nations member states⁸. They play a key role **in reinforcing the dynamics of co-operation** between the Council of Europe and the United Nations and contribute significantly to improving the information flow in both directions, which has led to greater awareness-raising about the Council of Europe and better co-ordination. They also **contribute to the visibility of our Organisation**, including through regular presence in relevant meetings that take place in these locations. They proved to be a precious tool for **outreach** towards the United Nations family, also **actively contributing to promoting the visibility of Council of Europe instruments**, both through formal events and informal contacts.

6. **Geneva hosts the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG)**, i.e. one of three major secretariat offices away from headquarters. UNOG is a member of this wider United Nations family in Geneva and co-operates closely with many of the United Nations entities present here⁹. Additionally, there is a multitude of governmental and non-governmental organisations, several liaison offices, and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). Emphasis is placed on co-operation with the Human Rights Council, in particular in the framework of the Universal Periodic Review, to which the Council of Europe contributes regularly as regards its member states. **The United Nations family in Vienna** is relevant for the Council of Europe's work in the rule of law area, as Vienna hosts the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, which assists member states in addressing the threat posed by drugs, crime, corruption and terrorism and in promoting security and justice for all.

⁶ On its side, the United Nations keeps a UNHCR Representation to the European Institutions in Strasbourg, offering a great interface of collaboration, especially in the field of asylum and international refugee law expertise.

⁷ While the chief role of the Vienna Liaison Office is liaison with the OSCE, where it is accredited, this Office also acts as a Permanent Delegation of the Council of Europe to the United Nations Office in Vienna (covering in particular the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, UNODC).

⁸ Other Liaison Offices are: Brussels, in charge of liaison with the European Union, and Warsaw, in charge of liaison with [OSCE/ODHIR](#), EU/Frontex, [Community of Democracies](#) and other international organisations based in Warsaw.

⁹ Of major importance to the Council of Europe Office in Geneva are, but not limited to: the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (OHCHR), the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR), the Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE), the International Organization for Migration (IOM), the International Telecommunication Union (ITU), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Labour Organization (ILO) and the World Intellectual Property Organization (WIPO).

II. Strengthening the Council of Europe external dimension: the establishment of a Liaison Office in New York

7. It is against the backdrop of a wealthy body of existing Council of Europe relations with other international organisations that, in May 2023, through **the Reykjavík Declaration**, Heads of State and Government committed to the strengthening of the role of the Council of Europe in the evolving European multilateral architecture and in global governance **by enhancing its external dimension**. They confirmed the prominence of the strategic partnership with the European Union and called for more political dialogue with **other international organisations**, including **the United Nations**, to **strengthen the partnership** between these organisations and the Council of Europe. Furthermore, they expressed the belief that **further synergies** are possible, notably when it comes to the **implementation of the SDGs** and underscored the need to avoid duplication of work and possibly competing standards.

8. New York hosts the **United Nations headquarters**. The United Nations in New York remains a political **decision-making centre**, **the international hub of political and diplomatic negotiations**. Several of the United Nations main organs, namely the United Nations Security Council (UNSC), the General Assembly (UNGA) and the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC), besides the secretariat, are based there.

9. The following **entities of the United Nations in New York** are relevant in the context of the Council of Europe work, including but not limited to: the Secretary-General and his Executive Office, the Department of Political and Peacebuilding Affairs (DPPA-DPO), the Office of Legal Affairs, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs (DESA), the United Nations Office of Counter-Terrorism (OCT), the Counter-Terrorism Committee Executive Directorate (CTED), the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Sexual Violence in Conflict, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Violence against Children, the Office of the Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Children and Armed Conflict, the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Technology (OSET), the Office of the Secretary-General's Envoy on Youth, the United Nations Alliance of Civilizations (UNAOC), UN Women, UNDP, UNICEF, and the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA).

10. In the **current geopolitical context**, the opening of the Council of Europe Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York would undoubtedly represent an **additional step in achieving the afore-mentioned goals set by the Reykjavík Declaration** in this regard. **Greater co-operation with the United Nations in New York** would enable further **promotion of the various conventions** of the Organisation and **support to Ukraine**, notably through the compensation mechanism, in line with the priorities of the Organisation. The Liaison Office would thus be instrumental in promoting the role of the Council of Europe as an organisation contributing to the **maintenance of peace and democratic security** on the European continent.

The added value of the New York Liaison Office

11. The presence of an Office in New York would ensure the **follow up of relevant debates taking place in all the afore-mentioned bodies and entities**, contribute to the strengthening of **multilateral co-operation** as well as assure the **visibility** of the Council of Europe at the UNHQs. Specifically, from the United Nations headquarters platform, with the plethora of possibility that this offers, the Liaison Office in New York would provide **added value** for the Organisation in the following fields:

- Step up **global outreach** efforts especially targeting the United Nations bodies in New York regarding **accountability** for the Russian aggression against Ukraine, notably on the **Register of Damage** for Ukraine,¹⁰ the future **Claims Commission** and the possible Special Tribunal for the Crime of Aggression and regarding the protection of the children of Ukraine.
- Reinforce co-operation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations in the fields of **combating violence against women**, in all its forms, online and offline, **gender equality** and women's rights by enhancing close interactions with, and regular contribution to, the work of United Nations bodies, including UN Women, and fora regarding the achievement of SDG 5¹¹, such as the sessions of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) and on the occasion of events co-organised with United Nations bodies;
- Perform a global outreach function by raising awareness and disseminating information (including through side-events), presenting and promoting the Council of Europe's work in the new fields of human rights aspects related to **artificial intelligence** and to the **environment**;
- Strongly raise awareness at the UNHQs of the Council of Europe's unequivocal **opposition to the death penalty**, including any reintroduction of it, in all cases and in all circumstances, particularly through supporting efforts for a **global moratorium**;¹²
- Promote **Council of Europe standards and international legal instruments**, by providing visibility and/or support for their implementation (in particular leading to better awareness and ratification of its **open conventions** and possible participation in enlarged partial agreements);
- Actively **participate in policy discussions** taking place at the UNHQs on ways to tackle new challenges arising from new complex global shocks of various kinds – or simply changes in our societies – thus giving voice to the Council of Europe in the United Nations bodies/Secretariat, **contributing from the outset** to these discussions, also **articulating the views of the Council of Europe standards and values at the UNHQs** (and thus on the international stage) and ensuring **high-level Council of Europe participation** at high-level summits and events;

¹⁰ The Register of Damage of Ukraine seeks a truly global membership. Any state that voted in favour of *United Nations General Assembly Resolution A/RES/ES-11/5 "Furtherance of remedy and reparation for aggression against Ukraine" of 14 November 2022* may become a Participant or an Associate Member by simply notifying the Secretary General of the Council of Europe about their intention to join by a letter or a Note Verbale.

¹¹ SDG5 "Achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls".

¹² The United Nations General Assembly discusses every two years a Resolution on the Moratorium on the Use of the Death Penalty.

- Besides giving visibility to the Council of Europe and **raising its profile on an international level** (as showcased through all afore-mentioned elements, the Office would perform practical and logistical **services in support of the activities** of the Council of Europe in New York, and in respect of **visits to the UNHQs** by Council of Europe dignitaries and officials from Strasbourg;
- Put greater emphasis on the **contribution of the Council of Europe to the relevant SDGs**, also promoting awareness of the Council of Europe's standards, which represent a unique measurable normative framework which can be used as indicators and benchmarks in the assessment of SDG implementation, as appropriate, and participate in possible discussions on the **follow-up to be given after 2030** to the Agenda for Sustainable Development, as well as to the implementation of recommendations and pledges contained in the **Pact for the Future** and its annex document (the Global Digital Compact and the Declaration on Future Generations);
- Co-ordinate the **negotiations on the biennial UNGA Resolution on Cooperation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe** with a view to having it adopted in the UNGA; in doing so, promote the values and instruments of the Council of Europe and actively advocate all relevant standards;
- Develop and maintain strong contacts and working relations with **other regional organisations** based in or often meeting in New York (e.g. African Union, Organization of American States, the Association of Southeast Asian Nations, etc.), also facilitating possible negotiations as appropriate on arrangements for dialogue and co-operation¹³.

12. The Office in New York **would ensure complementarity and synergies with the Offices in Geneva and Vienna**¹⁴, with each of these offices contributing to enhancing the external dimension, while remaining inter-connected, under the overall guidance of the Council of Europe headquarters.¹⁵ Exchange of information, mutual assistance and synergies already exist between the liaison offices, and the establishment of an Office based where the United Nations has its headquarters would be an opportunity to further enhance them. Through its Liaison Office in New York, the Council of Europe would **gain visibility** at the UNHQs, which would also be likely to have a positive spillover effect to the offices in Geneva and Vienna.

¹³ Through their regional or liaison offices when that is the case, and/or through the visits of their dignitaries in New York on the occasion of high-level events taking place at the UNHQs. Enhanced contacts with the Organization of American States, based in Washington, DC, would also be facilitated by a presence in New York.

¹⁴ The peace and security pillars of the United Nations can mainly be found in New York, and the human rights pillar in Geneva. Though the focus is narrower as opposed to the United Nations in New York and Geneva, the activities of the United Nations in Vienna are also relevant for the work of the Council of Europe as they relate to rule of law issues, such as addressing threats posed by drugs and crime.

¹⁵ The Directorate of Political Affairs and External relations (DPAER) holds the primary responsibility for the Council of Europe Offices in charge of liaison with other international organisations or institutions.

Estimated budgetary costs

13. The estimated full-year costs for the proposed Liaison Office would range from €590 000 to €800 000.

- Staff: the Liaison Office would consist of three staff members, one Head of Office (A6/5 or seconded official), one administrator (A2/3) and one administrative assistant (B2/3). Estimated costs would range from €350 000 to €560 000, depending on whether the Head of Office is a seconded official or not (cf. Annex).
- Non staff: this covers office rent, IT equipment and services, visibility activities and support costs, and would be further defined as the office is set up. Estimated costs amount to €240 000.

III. Annex – Terms of Reference of the Council of Europe Liaison Office in New York

Composition of the office and organisational setting:

The Council of Europe Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York would be composed of a Head of Office (with the rank/experience of Ambassador or relevant experience at senior level in an international organisation/body notably related to the UN and multilateral affairs), a Deputy Head of Office (A2/A3) and an assistant (B2/B3). The Head of Office would also act as a **Permanent Observer** to the United Nations and could additionally serve as Special Representative/Envoy of the Secretary General for multilateral co-operation.

Under the operational guidance of the DPAER, the Council of Europe Liaison Office with the United Nations in New York would ensure a strategic presence and would be responsible for relations with the United Nations in New York.

The Office would be tasked with promoting a better understanding of the Council of Europe's mandate to the United Nations in New York, with a view to enhancing political dialogue, co-operation and synergies, in **line with the goals set by the Reykjavík Declaration concerning the external dimension**. The New York Office would effectively serve as a bridge connecting United Nations entities in New York to the Council of Europe headquarters.

The Office would keep the Council of Europe headquarters in Strasbourg and the other liaison offices **abreast of developments at the United Nations Headquarters**. The New York Office would also specifically report and **advise on matters which affect the Council of Europe's relations with the United Nations**. It would ensure information flow and mutual assistance with the offices in Geneva and Vienna and the creation of further **synergies** as needed.

The functions of the Office

The Council of Europe Office's core tasks¹⁶ would include, *inter alia*:

- Represents the Secretary General of the Council of Europe vis-à-vis the United Nations Office in New York;
- Follows the activities carried out by the United Nations relevant bodies present in New York (cf. §9) in line with the priorities of the Organisation, and reports on developments relevant to the Council of Europe activities and policies;
- Identifies the needs of co-ordination with the United Nations in priority areas and contributes to the relevant consultations. Prepares proposals for the follow-up of major activities and events and participates in their implementation. Consults with DPAER in Strasbourg and the other liaison offices as appropriate, in particular, with the liaison office in Geneva to ensure complementarity;
- Promotes the enhancement of an effective co-operation between the Council of Europe and the United Nations in New York;

¹⁶ Cf. Resolution on the Status of Council of Europe Offices of 2010 – [Resolution CM/Res\(2010\)5](#), which, *inter alia* outlined the generic Terms of Reference (ToRs) of Council of Europe Offices in charge of liaison with one or more international organisations or institutions. Those ToRs served as a basis for indicating the core tasks of the Council of Europe Liaison Office in New York, while updating them to the specificities of the UNHQs environment and the realities of 2024.

- Provides support for the preparation, organisation and follow-up of Council of Europe events at UNHQs in New York;
- Identifies opportunities for joint activities and provides advice and support in the planning, negotiation, implementation and reporting on these activities;
- Promotes diplomatic relations and conducts a proactive media, academic and civil society policy;
- Raises the visibility of the Council of Europe by promoting greater awareness and understanding of its principles, standards, instruments and activities;
- Facilitates discussions with the relevant Permanent Missions in New York and Strasbourg and the DPAER on the biennial UNGA Resolution on Co-operation between the United Nations and the Council of Europe, with a view to having it adopted in the UNGA; in doing so, promotes the draft text of the resolution as approved by the Ministers' Deputies in Strasbourg;
- Supports the preparation of high-level Council of Europe visits, including on the occasion of the General Debate of the UNGA and the CSW, and provides guidance and support for visits of various Council of Europe institutions.