European Union and United Nations relations

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The committee adopted the own-initiative report by Armin LASCHET (EPP-ED, D) calling for the EU to strengthen its cooperation with the United Nations. MEPs stressed that multilateralism was still the best way of promoting peace and security. They pointed out that the EU and its Member States provide more than 50% of the UN's operational funds and peacekeeping forces, as well as over 60% of development aid. In their view, Europe should play a more active role within the UN by helping reform its organisational set-up so as to make the multilateral system as a whole more effective. The committee would like the Security Council to be made more representative, better organised and more efficient. MEPs suggested that the number of permanent and non-permanent members be increased to reflect better the current situation in the world. They argued that the EU should become a fully-fledged permanent member as soon as its legal personality is recognised. Africa, Asia and Latin America should each receive an extra seat. The committee suggested replacing the current veto system with a "double veto", i.e. a veto by a minimum of two permanent members. This right would only be allowed for issues covered by Chapter VII of the Charter: threats to peace, acts of aggression or violations of peace. The report also called for the EU to take part in the Security Council, the General Assembly, the Economic and Social Committee and the Commission on Human Rights, as well as the administrations of agencies and funds to which the EU budget contributes. MEPs believed that the future EU foreign minister, provided for in the draft Constitutional Treaty, should represent the EU on the Security Council. In addition, the committee recommended expanding the areas in which the EU and the UN could work more closely together, not only on development and humanitarian aid but also on conflict prevention and crisis management. Other areas of cooperation with the UN special agencies are mentioned, such as the environment, public health and the fight against terrorism and organised crime. The committee also identified areas where better cooperation was needed between the EU institutions. MEPs believed the European Parliament should improve its cooperation with the UN by practical means, for example by attending the annual sessions of the Security Council and the General Assembly. They also proposed that a parliamentary network be set up, which would meet each year under UN auspices. They highlighted the urgent need to improve the exchange of information and coordination between the Member States with a seat on the Security Council and the EU Presidency. By way of example, every time a declaration is issued in the name of the European Union, the Member States should refrain from making their own national declarations, apart from exceptional cases.