

H.E. Alexander Schallenberg
Minister
Federal Ministry for Europe,
Integration and Foreign Affairs
Minoritenplatz 8
1010 Vienna

Vienna, 07 April 2020

Subject:

Recommendations with regard to the EU response to the COVID-19 pandemic around the globe

Dear Mr. Schallenberg!

We, Global Responsibility, the Austrian Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid, are writing to you ahead of the upcoming Development Foreign Affairs Council taking place online on 8 April 2020 in order to present you our recommendations on the EU response to COVID-19 pandemic around the globe.

The Coronavirus knows no borders. **Solidarity** should be the guiding force of the EU at all stages, and as plans for recovery are developed, the EU - and the global donor community - should not lose sight of its commitment to work with and to support partner countries in achieving a prosperous, just and sustainable future for people and planet, in line with the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and the Paris Agreement. Strengthening the resilience of societies, economies and the environment should be a primary focus of EU's short-, medium- and long-term support. Therefore, we urge you to:

- **Focus on the people who are most at risk and in vulnerable situations and countries through a comprehensive, coherent and integrated EU response.** A response which addresses the health, social and economic consequences of the outbreak and its longer term impacts.
- **Support partner countries to strengthen their health systems already in the short- and medium-term, with the longer term goal of their providing universal access to health services** without discrimination and universal social protection or other cash transfers that reach those most in need.
- **Put women and girls at the centre of your response.** 69% of health sector jobs globally are held by women. The gendered roles played by women and girls in families, including caring for sick family members, increases their exposure to the virus and they must therefore be both adequately protected and valued.
- **Ensure protection for women and girls at risk of sexual and gender-based violence,** which is likely to rise as a result of the confinement measures used to contain the virus.



- **Focus on strengthening food and nutrition security.** Territorial markets that provide most of the food consumed in the developing world will be affected and small-scale farmers are already losing the channels to sell the food they produce.
- **Prioritise support for local CSOs** which have extensive reach in delivering at the community level and working alongside the most marginalised and excluded groups, including women's networks.
- **To facilitate these responses, allocate appropriate resources** at Member State and EU level since redirecting current funding will not be sufficient and could be detrimental.
- **Adopt a longer-term systemic approach.** Work coherently to move from a symptomatic (short-term emergency response) to a systemic longer term approach which prioritises people and supporting households and small and medium enterprises, including building people's resilience to weather the current crisis and crises to come.
- **Align support and policy responses with ambitions on climate change, biodiversity and wider environmental protection.** There is both an opportunity and necessity to address climate change and environmental degradation, inequalities and resilience at the same time. In supporting partner countries in their recovery plans, the EU should take a coherent and integrated approach aiming clearly at achieving a green, equitable and resilient recovery.
- **Speak with one voice in the IMF and World Bank** highlighting the need to cancel permanently all principal, interest and charges on sovereign external debt due in 2020 for all countries in need.

In the attached Annex you will find detailed recommendations on the EU's support to address the COVID-19 pandemic around the Globe from CONCORD Europe - the European NGO confederation for Relief and Development.

We hope that you will take our recommendations into account during your discussions and we look forward to the EU's response.

We thank you for your time and consideration.

Yours sincerely,

Annelies Vilim
Director
Global Responsibility