

H.E. Alexander Schallenberg
Minister
Federal Ministry for European
and International Affairs
Minoritenplatz 8
1010 Vienna

Vienna, 13 November 2020

Dear Mr. Schallenberg,

Ahead of the Foreign Affairs Council (Development) meeting on 23rd November, CONCORD Europe, the European NGO Confederation for relief and development, and Global Responsibility are sharing a number of recommendations, which we hope will be reflected in the outcomes of your discussions.

CONCORD and Global Responsibility welcomed the adoption of the Global EU Response to COVID-19 in partner countries. Team Europe is a clear step forward in terms of effectiveness to avoid EU ODA fragmentation and improve coordination in partner countries. The key role of EU Delegations (EUDs) in implementing the response could have very positive results. However, as CONCORD highlights in the recent *AidWatch 2020* report, regrettably, the package presented in April did not imply fresh resources. We also regret the lack of transparency and accountability over expenditure of those resources, since neither the EU guidelines to the EUDs on the Global EU Response nor the EU monitoring report have been made public so far.¹

Since the Team Europe approach is likely to form a crucial part of how the EU engages in international partnerships and will underpin EU joint programming of future development funds beyond the pandemic, a number of major issues need to be addressed immediately.

Team Europe should commit to **massively scaling up the ODA** dedicated to the response to the COVID-19 crisis and go beyond 'striving to protect ODA budgets'.² On the contrary, given the setback to achieving the 2030 Agenda that COVID-19 represents and the soaring inequalities it has caused, more aid is desperately needed.

¹ CONCORD Europe, *CONCORD AidWatch 2020. Knock-on effects: An urgent call to leave no one behind*, October 2020, <https://concordeurope.org/2020/10/28/aidwatch-2020-knock-on-effects-an-urgent-call-to-leave-no-one-behind/>

² OECD DAC, *Tackling coronavirus - Contributing to the global effort*, April 2020, <http://www.oecd.org/dac/development-assistance-committee/dac-covid-19-statement.htm>



The European Commission and EU Member States should **mainstream equality-focused approaches** across Team Europe.³ Priority should be given to people-centred interventions that strengthen social sectors such as education, health, social protection and small-scale agriculture and food security in a socially just and equitable manner.

The Global EU Response has been, to date, entirely gender blind. Team Europe should **increase its focus on gender equality** and women's and girls' empowerment in the COVID-19 response, by analysing the different impacts on girls and boys and men and women of the crisis and providing tailored responses. Of course, this recommendation should be applied over and above the response to the pandemic.

Team Europe should provide **full transparency of commitments and responses to COVID-19**, enabling all stakeholders to track and monitor changes in financial allocations. The European Commission should make publicly available a comprehensive monitoring report of the EU global response to COVID-19 and how this aligns with the 2030 Agenda and the Paris Agreement. This should include a breakdown of EU Member States' contributions to the package, specifying if those are additional resources.

Local CSOs and international NGOs have been, are and will always be at the forefront of efforts to reach the most marginalised people. However, despite this, very little of the global COVID-19 appeal has been channelled through CSOs/NGOs. **Team Europe should significantly increase its engagement with and support to CSOs**, both as part of the 'build back better' efforts and in the programming cycle. It has been proven time and again that such collaboration results in better outcomes for people. The programming process for the NDICI must therefore include civil society organisations in a meaningful way. To this end, more structured consultations with CSOs, both in headquarters and at partner country level, are crucial. Member States involved in Team Europe Initiatives should support the general outreach to civil society, including by encouraging their Embassies to ensure consultation with and space for local civil society as key implementing partners. EU donors should ensure that local CSOs and international NGOs working on the front line are funded to implement programmes and projects tackling the COVID-19 pandemic and its consequences at community level, to reach people left furthest behind. In the absence of additional resources for COVID-19 response and recovery, and with most funds going to geographic envelopes, ensuring optimal complementarity of the EU's funding is crucial. Team Europe should thus ensure that the thematic programming consultations also inform geographic programming.

ODA resources alone will not be enough to achieve a sustainable recovery and the 2030 Agenda on time. The Global EU Response support to private sector instruments should not, however, come at the expense of **grants-based modalities**. Team Europe should ensure that support to the private sector is only given to those companies which contribute to achieving the 2030 Agenda, when there is a proven development

³ CONCORD Europe, *CONCORD proposals for mainstreaming equality in international cooperation*, June 2020, <https://concord-europe.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/06/CONCORD-proposals-for-mainstreaming-equality-in-international-cooperation.pdf>



additionality, and development effectiveness principles are fully guaranteed. Furthermore, Team Europe should lead on debt suspension and cancellation efforts and work towards a **UN permanent mechanism on debt**, for the systematic, comprehensive and enforceable restructuring of sovereign debt.

Lastly, Team Europe should **strengthen effective mechanisms to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development**, ensuring their more systematic and efficient use by all EU institutions and Member States, including at the highest political level. The EU should perform sustainability impact assessments in every policy sphere, including as regards its responses to the pandemic.

Since the EU is truly committed to building back better, CONCORD and Global Responsibility would like to renew our calls to put solidarity first and leave no one behind. We would very much appreciate the opportunity to discuss how we can work together to achieve this common objective.

Yours sincerely,

Annelies Vilim
Director
Global Responsibility