

Dear Peter Eriksson, Minister for International Development Cooperation,

In advance of your discussions on 8th June, CONCORD Europe is sharing a number of recommendations which build on the response to the COVID-19 crisis and link to your ongoing negotiations. The next 7-year EU budget and the EU's partnership with Africa must align with the need to rebuild better after the COVID-19 pandemic. The EU should not simply target a return to the status quo ante. This will require not just money but also a re-thinking of how European and global systems function. CONCORD Europe counts on the European Union and its Member States to uphold the principle of leaving no one behind and use all the tools at its disposal to support partner countries to rebuild better.

Recommendations for external aspects MFF/Next Generation Europe

We welcome the European Commission's Next Generation EU proposal to top up the Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027. An increase in financial resources is much needed to reach the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) by 2030 and achieve the objectives of the Paris Climate Agreement especially given the setbacks resulting from the COVID-19 crisis. Furthermore, we appreciate the external dimension of the Next Generation EU fund and the strong focus on the green and digital transformations in both domestic and external efforts.

However, we urge the EU, once again, to ensure that strong social and environmental safeguards are applied to the EFSD+ and the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) as a whole. Concrete tools and mechanisms must be developed to ensure true alignment with the SDGs and the Paris Agreement. The development financial architecture chosen by the EU must not divert scarce resources needed to achieve the SDGs.

Support provided with blending facilities, guarantee funds and other incentives to the private sector should therefore address the needs of local, small-scale economic actors and producers. The privatisation of public services such as health and education must at all costs be avoided. In addition, CONCORD strongly encourages you to redirect some of the private finance instruments towards grant-based support for countries most in need. Fulfilling people's human rights, including through investments in human development and reducing inequalities and poverty, must be at the core of the approach to build resilient societies.

Recommendations for EU-ACP negotiations final phase

Now that the negotiations regarding the new EU-ACP Agreement are reaching a final phase and a consolidated text is soon to be agreed upon, CONCORD would like to flag a number of concerns. The current COVID-19 pandemic creates new challenges for both EU and ACP countries and highlights the need for a fairer, greener and more people-centred partnership.

A number of key issues are still to be negotiated between the EU and ACP countries, but are either contested or at risk of being diluted. We call on you to ensure the recommendations below are reflected during the final round of negotiations.

- **Inclusive, sustainable economic development:** the new agreement must clearly set out that social rights, the environment and the climate will take precedence over economic gain, not the other way around. Including language on the promotion of trade in sustainable products and of responsible business conduct does not suffice. Measures must be foreseen to make sure that products, investments and services that are unsustainable or linked to violations of rights are no longer allowed onto the EU market. This requires strong regulations in place in the EU. The EU must ensure that large companies and elites in Europe and Africa are not the main beneficiaries of future trade agreements, while workers and small producers with inadequate protection of their fundamental rights and weak or inexistent social protection face unfair competition and are unable to make a decent living.
- **Role of Civil Society:** the new agreement offers an important opportunity to guarantee a visible role for EU and ACP civil society at all levels and in all aspects of the partnership. We therefore urge you to ensure that the principles of inclusiveness, people-to-people cooperation and dialogue, multi-stakeholder partnerships and active citizenship are reaffirmed without qualification so as to ensure independent CSO representation. The new agreement should most particularly include a commitment to establish, both in the foundation and the three regional pillars, concrete mechanisms

and means for civil society actors to systematically and transparently participate in political and policy dialogue, implementation, and monitoring and evaluation of actions undertaken within the framework of the agreement.

- **Civil Society Space:** In the current situation of a widespread shrinking of civic and democratic space in all regions of the world, it is of utmost importance that the EU maintains its position to include a clear commitment in the text of the foundation to preserve and broaden an enabling environment for a diverse, active and independent civil society.
- **Promoting sexual and reproductive health and rights for all:** gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women will not be possible without the realisation of sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR) of all individuals. Limitations in access to SRHR services and information negatively impact women's and girls' health and on their ability to exercise free choice and to participate meaningfully in society, the economy and political life. It also increases the risks related to gender-based violence. Since the future EU-ACP partnership agreement aims to realise gender equality as an essential element to achieve equitable sustainable development, it should fully commit to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to universal access to quality and affordable SRHR services, including comprehensive sexuality education.
- **Migration** has been one of the most contentious issues during the negotiations. The benefits of migration can only be reaped when regular migratory channels are safe and available. This requires the creation of more and effective legal pathways for economic migrants at EU level as well as upholding the fundamental human right to ask for international protection. Regarding 'return and readmission', CONCORD urges you to put strong mechanisms in place to ensure that returns always happen on a voluntary basis, accompanied by the indispensable sustainable reintegration assistance and monitoring. Moreover, return and readmission must be dealt with independently and never be a condition for cooperation between the EU and ACP countries in other policy areas.
- **Means of implementation of the future partnership:** in the spirit of partnership and in respect of the ownership principle, EU must respond to ACP countries' concerns regarding the means of implementation. It is far from sure that the future Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) will provide the same guarantees as the EDF in terms of predictability, alignment, joint EU-ACP programming and management and fair distribution of financial resources based on objective criteria. The future instrument does not foresee an all-ACP funding envelope nor the ring-fencing of the resources allocated to Caribbean and Pacific partners. Moreover, the NDICI reserve will be common for all regions and programmes, and the parameters and procedure for its activation are unclear. We therefore urge you to make sure that the future agreement and the NDICI provide an equitable framework of cooperation and a real improvement for all, both in terms of volumes and quality of funding.

Please also find attached some more detailed recommendations with regard to gender equality and women's rights from the CONCORD Sweden gender equality working group.

CONCORD calls on you to focus your diplomatic efforts on the wellbeing of people and planet, with the highest priority being given to leaving no one behind. We would very much appreciate the opportunity to meet to discuss how we can work together towards this common objective.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Your sincerely



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Chair of CONCORD Sweden

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Director Concord Europe

¹ As members of CONCORD, Caritas Europa and CIDSE support the collective work of the Confederation, but do not (fully) endorse the SRHR language used in this statement.

