

20 June 2018

Dear EU Heads of State and Government,

Re. EU Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-2027

We are writing to you in advance of the European Council on 28 and 29 June. As you are aware, the EU's external actions should be based on its values as set out in Article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty and which have led to a number of international commitments on development, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, gender equality, rule of law, and human rights and democracy. We hope that you will find time during your upcoming discussions on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) to reflect on these commitments, including the implementation of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the Agenda for Humanity, the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, the European Consensus on Development and the European Consensus on Humanitarian aid.

We strongly believe that the decisions you make in the coming months about the size and scope of the next MFF will be central to ensuring that the EU is able to translate its laudable ambitions into concrete actions. In this context, we urge you to consider the following recommendations:

1. Increase the budget for the EU's external actions

Our networks welcome the European Commission's (EC) communication of 2 May which foresees a moderate increase in the expenditure ceiling for the EU's external actions and we urge you to renew the commitment which the European Council made in February 2013 to spend at least 90% of the external relations heading on ODA-eligible actions as currently defined by the OECD-DAC.

EU development co-operation should have a clear focus on the needs of partner countries' populations and be fully aligned with aid and development effectiveness principles rather than be driven by short-term self-interest. Similarly, EU humanitarian assistance should be need-based and shaped by the humanitarian principles.

2. Maintain separate external financing instruments for development aid, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy, and peacebuilding

Our networks are convinced that separate instruments for development aid, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy, and peacebuilding in the current MFF have allowed the EU to make a significant difference in these areas. In our view, it would be possible to

increase complementarity and coordination between the various instruments without merging them all for the sake of presumed simplification. Based on the EC's proposal, the Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) does not include poverty eradication or the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) as specific objectives. Furthermore, it is not clear how the NDICI will provide adequate levels of predictability, transparency and accountability with regard to the EU's commitment to development aid, humanitarian assistance, human rights and democracy, and peacebuilding.

The EU should demonstrate its continued commitment to promoting human rights and democracy in its partner countries by maintaining a separate thematic instrument. The European Instrument for Democracy and Human Rights has played a major role in protecting and promoting human rights and democracy. The EU's support in these areas should include adequate, independent and impartial funding to individuals and organisations working on human rights, civil society space and democracy, irrespective of their legal status.

Given the important role which the Instrument contributing to Stability and Peace has played in terms of enabling the EU to support peacebuilding and conflict prevention in its partner countries, we believe that the EU should maintain a separate instrument which is dedicated to supporting civilian peacebuilding activities.

Furthermore, we call for the creation of a dedicated Sustainable Development Instrument which is 100% ODA-eligible, fully aligned with aid and development effectiveness principles, and targeted at poverty eradication and the achievement of the SDGs and the Paris Agreement.

We welcome the EC's proposal to keep a separate humanitarian aid instrument based on the Humanitarian Aid Regulation. The existence of a separate instrument has helped to ensure that EU humanitarian aid can be delivered according to the humanitarian principles of humanity, neutrality, independence and impartiality, as it maintains a clear separation between the source and purpose of humanitarian aid funding and other financing instruments which have political objectives. It is also the best budgetary set up to match the important operational necessity of reaching people in a timely and effective manner.

3. Increase support for civil society

Civil society actors play a key role in helping the EU to achieve its external action objectives in the areas of development, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, gender equality, rule of law, human rights and democracy. It is, therefore, essential that the EU continues to support civil society organisations (CSOs) to fulfil this important role. In this context, the amount of funding which is allocated to CSOs in the proposed Heading 6 (Neighbourhood and the World) must be greater than the amount which is allocated under the current Heading 4 (Global Europe).

All future external financing instruments should be as accessible as possible to a diverse range of CSOs, and this should be reflected in the rules which govern them.

In addition to providing financial support to civil society actors, the EU should continue to provide them with political support, especially in those countries where CSOs face undue interference in their activities via legislative and administrative barriers, or arbitrary interference from the state or non-state actors.

We wish you fruitful discussions in the coming weeks and we look forward to engaging with you on these and other issues as the negotiations on the next MFF progress.

Yours sincerely,

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cc.

Mr Donald Tusk, President of the European Council
Mr Jean-Claude Juncker, President of the European Commission
Ms Federica Mogherini, High Representative Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission
Mr Günther Oettinger, Commissioner for Budget and Human Resources
Mr Neven Mimica, Commissioner for International Cooperation and Development
Mr Christos Stylianides, Commissioner for Humanitarian Aid and Crisis Management
Mr Johannes Hahn, Commissioner for European Neighbourhood Policy and Enlargement Negotiations
Mr Dimitris Avramopoulos, Commissioner for Migration, Home Affairs and Citizenship
Mr Julian King, Commissioner for Security Union



European NGO confederation for relief and development

CONCORD is the European NGO confederation for Relief and Development. With the support of our 51 members, our confederation, representing over 2,600 NGOs, is the main interlocutor with the EU institutions on development policy. Since 2003, we work towards a world where people enjoy their right to live free of poverty and exploitation as well as their right to enjoy wellbeing and equality.



European Peacebuilding Liaison Office

The European Peacebuilding Liaison Office (EPLO) is the independent civil society platform of European NGOs, networks of NGOs and think tanks which are committed to peacebuilding and the prevention of violent conflict.

EPLO aims to influence the EU so that it promotes and implements measures which lead to sustainable peace between states and within states and peoples, and which transform and resolve conflicts non-violently.



The Human Rights and Democracy Network (HRDN) is an informal grouping of NGOs operating at the EU level in the broader areas of human rights, democracy and peace.

HRDN's vision is that human rights and democracy are placed at the heart of the EU's internal and external policy agenda. This vision should manifest itself in an EU which effectively protects human rights at home and is a force for positive change in the world. In pursuit of this vision, HRDN aims to influence EU and EU Member States' human rights policies and the programming of their funding instruments to promote democracy, human rights and peace.



VOICE (Voluntary Organisations in Cooperation in Emergencies) is a network representing 86 European NGOs active in humanitarian aid worldwide. VOICE is the main NGO interlocutor with the European Union on emergency aid and disaster risk reduction and it promotes the values of humanitarian NGOs.