

19 February 2018

Dear EU heads of state and government,

Re. Multiannual Financial Framework 2021-

We are writing to you in advance of your informal meeting on Friday 23 February and the ministerial conference on the next Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF) on Friday 9 March.

We hope that you will find time during your upcoming discussions on the next MFF to reflect on the various commitments on development, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, gender equality, rule of law, human rights and democracy, which the EU has made in recent years, including in the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, the World Humanitarian Summit, the Global Strategy for the EU's Foreign and Security Policy, and the European Consensus on Development.

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 those laudable ambitions into concrete actions. In this context, we urge you to consider the following recommendations:

1. Include a strong external budget focused on EU values

The EU's external actions should be based on its values as set out in Article 21 of the Lisbon Treaty. These values have led to a number of international commitments on development, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, gender equality, rule of law, human rights and democracy, which the EU cannot fulfil unless it has the financial means to do so.

This will require an increase in the amount of funding which the EU allocates to external actions (current Heading 4 plus the European Development Fund (EDF)) and for this funding to remain distinct from that which is allocated in pursuit of other objectives (e.g. under current Heading 3). It should have a clear external focus and should, therefore, not be used to fund activities aimed at securing the EU's borders. Similarly, it should not be used to support military activities either inside the EU or in partner countries.

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

The EU's humanitarian aid must be delivered in a timely manner, in accordance with the humanitarian principles and based on needs, as enshrined in the Treaty and the European Consensus on Humanitarian Aid. Therefore, a separate instrument for humanitarian aid must be maintained. Similarly, the EU should demonstrate its continued commitment to promoting human rights and democracy and to building peace in partner countries by maintaining separate thematic instruments dedicated to these topics. In the current political context, in

which civil society organisations (CSOs) and human rights defenders (HRDs) are under threat globally, it is paramount that the EU ensures adequate, independent and impartial funding to individuals and organisations working on human rights, democracy and peacebuilding issues.

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 CSOs to fulfil this important role. 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 also try to use its political weight to ensure that they are able to fulfil their various roles unhindered, especially in those countries where civil society activities are curtailed and/or are at risk.

4. Involve CSOs in the MFF process

By involving CSOs working on development, humanitarian assistance, peacebuilding, human rights and democracy in dialogue at the different steps of decision-making processes, the EU can maximise the effectiveness of its external actions. The EU institutions and EU Member States should involve CSOs at the highest level in the ongoing discussions about the next MFF in order to ensure that EU decision-makers hear as diverse a range of views as possible.

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.

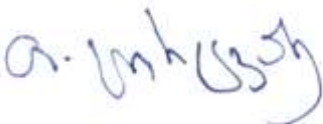
Yours sincerely,



Johannes Trimmel
President
CONCORD



Sonya Reines-Djivanides
Executive Director
EPLO



Tinatin Tsertsvadze
Troika member
HRDN



Kathrin Schick
Director
VOICE

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



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.



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 84 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.