

President Ursula Von Der Leyen  
Berlaymont  
European Commission  
Rue de la Loi  
Brussels

12<sup>th</sup> February, 2021

Dear President Von der Leyen

In these early months of 2021, our common pledge “to leave no-one behind” is more critical than ever. As the COVID-19 pandemic continues to wreak havoc in both high- and low-income countries, threatening lives and aggravating existing inequalities, it is high time for international solidarity and justice.

CONCORD is joining other conveners of influential civil society networks and platforms in sending letters to the leaders of our world to call for a far more equitable approach to the current vaccination drive.<sup>1</sup> Together we represent thousands of civil society organisations and their partners who work with millions of people who are marginalised and deprived of their human rights.

While we recognise that every EU Member State has the responsibility to respect, protect and promote the right to adequate healthcare for all those living on their territory, we will not be safe until we are all safe, especially given the new variants of the virus developing in various locations around the globe. It is therefore clear that universal access to the COVID-19 vaccine is the only solution to end the pandemic and mitigate the deepening socio-economic inequalities. The vaccine(s) – and the necessary medical goods and technology to make it - should be seen as a global public good. All people worldwide, regardless of their race, colour, sex, age, language, religion, political or other opinion, national or social origin, migration status, property, birth or other status, must have access to an effective vaccine in a timely manner. And we must prioritise the most marginalised, those most vulnerable to the virus and those on the front line of the response.

We are therefore seriously concerned by the competition on access to vaccines and by some of the actions taken by the EU, such as blocking the COVID-19 patent waiver in the WTO. We urge the EU to agree to a TRIPS waiver and to work with other countries to this end as a matter of urgency, so that all countries can fulfill their obligations regarding people’s rights to life and healthcare. Similarly, no matter how temporary may be the measure of restricting the export of vaccines, it only serves to demonstrate, yet again, that the EU, and its Member States, will gladly leave others behind when the pressure is on. This will most likely not be seen as a measure to improve transparency by your partners, but as one of competitive selfishness. As Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the WHO, said recently, “[t]he world is on the brink of a catastrophic moral failure, and the price of this failure will be paid with lives and livelihoods in the world’s poorest countries.”

In the new spirit of ‘partnership’ which the EU claims it wishes to develop with countries around the world, it should therefore make very clear how its ‘vaccine-sharing mechanism’ will go further than allowing partners Europe’s left-overs. Not only should the EU, and its Member States, refrain from all actions which

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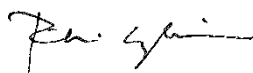
<sup>1</sup> A [letter](#) has been sent to the UN Secretary-General and all UN Member States via the Geneva Permanent Missions by a coalition including ICVA, the International Civil Society Centre, Interaction and FORUS.

undermine other countries' chances of developing or buying vaccines, but it must commit to do far more than donate to the COVAX initiative, given its severe limitations. Similarly, Member States should be wary of all bilateral actions which serve to reinforce the difficulty for partner countries to access a vaccine.

CONCORD urges the EU to work with partners, including the private sector, such that by World Health Day on 7<sup>th</sup> April, a clear plan has been established as to how to ensure that all people across the globe will have access to a vaccine against COVID-19. We in civil society stand ready to work hand-in-hand with you to this end. We are willing to support the roll-out of effective and all-inclusive national vaccine programmes. Only by working together can we defeat this pandemic and successfully stand against future ones.

We thank you for your attention to this life or death matter.

Yours sincerely



Rilli Lapalainen  
President of CONCORD  
Director, Sustainable Development, FINGO



Tanya Cox  
Director  
CONCORD Europe

Cc: Charles Michel, President of the Council of the EU  
Jutta Urpilainen, Commissioner for International Partnerships

