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President of the European Council  
Rue de la Loi, 175  
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*01 December, 2021*

*CONCORD a.i.s.b.l.  
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Dear President Michel,

Now that the 6th European Union (EU)-African Union (AU) Summit has been scheduled to take place on 17-18 February 2022 CONCORD, the European Confederation of development NGOs would like to flag a number of serious concerns. Throughout the course of our longstanding, ongoing dialogue with the EU institutions and with African civil society partners in the EU-AU partnership framework, we have consistently advocated for a people-centred partnership and achieving transformational results for all. A key element to this is a meaningful engagement with civil society.

### **A people-centred EU-AU Summit**

Currently, Europe and Africa are faced with several ongoing crises: the climate and biodiversity crisis; a crisis of defending basic human rights; democracy and civic space; and the COVID-19 pandemic and its social and economic consequences, which have reversed many human and sustainable development gains. Existing inequalities and fragilities have been exacerbated and new challenges are arising in a wide range of interconnected sectors. These challenges highlight the urgency for a fair, just and green partnership between the EU and Africa. Building resilient and peaceful states and societies that respect human rights and planetary boundaries, reduce poverty and inequalities, including gender inequality and gender-based violence, and secure equal opportunities and universal access to social protection, healthcare, education and nutritious food, to mention just a few objectives, should be at the core of the future partnership between the EU and Africa. Ensuring that the upcoming Summit and its outcomes address these challenges in a systemic manner is critical to achieving transformational results.

To do so and to build and co-create a new type of partnership based on equality, a people-centred approach which focuses on human development and respects and enforces human rights is much needed. By contrast with the October 2021 Joint Communiqué from the EU-AU Foreign Affairs Ministerial Meeting in Kigali, in the future EU-AU partnership, EU and African leaders should include human development and human rights as a fundamental, stand-alone priority for strengthened cooperation, as they are the prerequisite for sustainable development and for all other strategic priorities.

A comprehensive, ambitious plan to advance human development and environmental and social justice should be developed as a concrete outcome of the EU-AU Summit. The plan should rely on three pillars: addressing structural inequalities, including gender inequalities;

strengthening links and coherence across policy sectors (e.g. education, health, food, social protection, trade, digitalisation); and meeting ODA commitments.

### **Meaningful engagement with civil society**

We welcome the references in the Joint Communiqué to the value of ensuring an active engagement with civil society organisations. However, consultation in the lead-up to the Summit is sorely lacking, despite there having been one meeting with some CSO representatives before the Ministerial Meeting in Kigali. EU and African leaders have been silent on the matter of ensuring the active participation of civil society in the partnership between the EU and Africa, both ahead of and during the EU-AU Summit and as part of the implementation of the partnership itself. This demonstrates a blatant incoherence between discourse and actions.

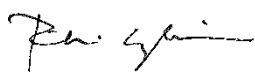
If the EU is committed to create a collaborative, equal and sustainable partnership, each of its institutions and services, without exception, must reach out to civil society and listen to its recommendations; it is civil society that represents the voices of those who are often the most marginalised *and* the most impacted by decisions that EU and AU leaders take.

We urge EU and AU leaders to follow up on the commitment in the recent Communiqué by agreeing to establish institutional and operational structures and mechanisms for meaningful civil society participation in policy processes. This should include concrete proposals on information-sharing, consultation, transparency, and open dialogue.

It is critically important that EU institutions and services and Member States involved in the preparation of the EU-AU Summit hold a formal consultation, in a timely manner, with those European and African civil society organisations that are eager to contribute to the preparation of the Summit's outcome. Since it will feed into the political process ahead of the EU-AU Summit, it is also essential that the European Council place a people-centred approach and ensure meaningful engagement with civil society at the core of the Council Conclusions, which will be adopted at the meeting on 16 December. The Presidency of the European Council is a key ally to achieve this.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter.

Yours sincerely,



Rilli Lappalainen  
President of CONCORD



Tanya Cox  
Director of CONCORD

cc: Josep Borrell, EU High Representative/Vice President  
Jutta Urpilainen, European Commissioner for International Partnerships  
Maud Arnould, EU High Representative/Vice President's Cabinet Expert  
Lora Borissova, European Commissioner for International Partnerships' Cabinet Expert  
Tine Rus, Delegate COAFR, COLAC, Permanent Representation of the Republic of Slovenia to the EU

NATIONAL PLATFORMS	 Global Responsibility Austrian Platform for Development and Humanitarian Aid	 BELGISCH PLATFORM PLATE-FORME BELGE CONCORD ACODEV   11.11.11   ngo-koördinatie	 BPID Bulgarian Platform for International Development	 Platforma za međunarodnu građansku solidarnost Hrvatska Croatian Platform for International Citizen Solidarity CROSOL	 CYINDEP Cypriot Island wide NGO Development Platform	 FORS	
	 GLOBAL FOCUS Slovak CSOs for Development Cooperation	 fingo	 COORDINATION SUD	 VENRO ASSOCIATION OF GERMAN DEVELOPMENT AND HUMANITARIAN AID NGOs	 Hellenic Platform for Development	 HAND	
	 dóchas The Irish Association of Non-Governmental Development Organisations	 Network of NGOs in Europe for Emergency and Disaster Relief CONCORD ITALIA	 LAPAS London Platform for Development Cooperation	 LITDEA LITHUANIAN NATIONAL NON-GOVERNMENTAL DEVELOPMENT COOPERATION ORGANISATIONS PLATFORM	 Cercle de coopération des ONGS DU LUXEMBOURG	 SKOP Solidarjetà u Koperazzjoni	 PARTOS
	 ZAGRANICA	 ONGD PLATAFORMA PORTUGUESA	 FOND Fondation d'Organisation Non-Gouvernementale de Belgique	 Ambrella Platform for Development Organisations	 SLOGA Slovenian Global Action	 LA COORDINADORA DE ORGANIZACIONES PARA EL DESARROLLO	 CONCORD UNITED KINGDOM
	 bond	NETWORKS	 actalliance eu actalliance.eu	 act:onaid	 ADRA	 Alliance 2015 towards the eradication of poverty	 care
	 caritas europa		 cbm together we can do more	 ChildFund Alliance	 CIDSE together for global justice	 eucord European Union Confederation for Relief and Development	 GNDR Global Network of Civil Society Organisations for Gender Equality
	 humanity & inclusion	 IPPF International Planned Parenthood Federation European Network	 LIGHT FOR THE WORLD	 OXFAM International	 PLAN INTERNATIONAL	 Save the Children	 Sightsavers
	 solidar	 SOS CHILDREN'S VILLAGES INTERNATIONAL	 Terre des Hommes International Federation	 wecf	 Wetlands INTERNATIONAL	 World Vision	 WWF
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