

**Dr Ursula von der Leyen**

President of the European Commission  
Rue de la Loi 200, 1049 Brussels, Belgium

*Brussels, 4th July 2024*

**Open letter**  
**Seven EU-level organisations call on the new European Commission  
to prioritise development cooperation**

Dear President von der Leyen,

On behalf of seven EU-level organisations working on international cooperation, human rights, education, health and European affairs, and representing over 2600 CSOs across Europe and beyond, we would like to congratulate you on your nomination for a second term as President of the European Commission.

In your 2023 State of the Union address, you expressed the EU's commitment to achieving greater equality in the global distribution of power and wealth. In light of an erosion of multilateralism, it is certainly in the EU's interest to build trust with its partners by working towards global wellbeing and stability. We therefore urge you to show leadership in this area and genuinely champion sustainable development and global inequality reduction. No countries or people should be left behind during the much-needed economic, social and environmental transitions. It is crucial that the EU respects the commitments it has undertaken while basing its external action on respect for human dignity, human rights, equality and solidarity. The Commission must strengthen its reputation vis-à-vis partner countries and put the well-being of people and the planet at the centre of the new institutional mandate.

These aims cannot be achieved without an active role of civil society in Europe and globally. Civil society organisations are a crucial link between citizens on one hand, and the EU and governments on the other. Working together across borders at all levels, we are your allies in efforts to promote sustainable human, social and economic development. As such, we strongly encourage you and the whole of the next European Commission to engage with civil society organisations as meaningful and equal partners who can positively contribute to EU policy elaboration, implementation and oversight.

We call upon you to select a College of Commissioners that will be ready to act in line with the aforementioned priorities. Specifically, we are convinced that the portfolio of the Commissioner for International Partnerships should be maintained in the new mandate and remain distinct from other policy areas such as trade, security or migration management. Supporting sustainable development in partner countries should not be based on the EU's commercial or geopolitical interests. Instead, commitment to the 2030 Agenda, including global inequality reduction and the wellbeing of people and the planet must be at the heart of DG INTPA's mission. In their work, the incumbent should also regard civil society as a genuine partner while supporting the President to ensure policy coherence for sustainable development backed up by the requisite funding.

The High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy, in turn, will play a key role in ensuring the Union remains true to its own principles in external affairs, as guaranteed by the Treaties. To this end, the new High Representative should remain committed to embedding human rights, human security and gender equality as

cornerstones of EU external action. Embracing collaboration over competition and promoting civic space globally is in the EU's interest, in line with its social contract and in the spirit of promoting a just and inclusive rules-based world order.

In order to provide more clarity about our vision for these key roles, we attach our model mission letters for the future Commissioner for International Partnerships and High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy as annexes. We invite you to consider them while preparing the actual mission statements of the members of your College.

In the event of the approval of your candidature by the European Parliament, we would be happy to meet you to elaborate on the proposals outlined in this letter and to discuss our contribution to the European Commission's 2024-2029 mandate.

We are looking forward to working with you for more equal, just and inclusive societies in a sustainable world.

Yours sincerely,

#### Signatories:



**CONCORD** is the European Confederation of 58 NGOs working on sustainable development and international cooperation. We envision a world where people live free of poverty and exploitation. This must be achieved by a citizen-led transformative agenda based on social justice and gender equality and respecting diversity and the limits of our planetary capacity. We are the main interlocutor with the EU institutions on sustainable development policy and international cooperation. We work together to ensure that European policies promote sustainable economic, social and human development, addressing the causes of poverty, based on human rights, gender equality, justice and democracy.



**The EU-LAT Network** is a pluralistic network of European movements and organisations that promote solidarity between the people of Latin America and Europe. The network was founded on October 11, 2017 after two European networks - CIFCA (Copenhagen Initiative for Central America and Mexico) and Grupo Sur - decided to join forces in order to strengthen their advocacy actions to promote participatory European policies, with a gender perspective, that contributes to the comprehensive respect for human rights, democratisation and sustainable development in Latin America.



European network on debt and development

**The European Network on Debt and Development (Eurodad)** is a civil society network advocating for democratically-controlled, gender-just and human rights-based financial and economic systems. Eurodad is a network of 60 European NGOs in 28 countries. We work to ensure that the financial system at the global and European levels is democratically controlled, environmentally sustainable, contributes to poverty eradication and delivers human rights for all.



**Friends of Europe** is an independent think tank for a more inclusive, sustainable, and forward-thinking Europe. We take a whole of society, whole of economy approach. We engage citizens, critical thinkers, and unusual voices, alongside today's and tomorrow's decisionmakers. We think it's time for a renewed 21st-century social contract for Europe based on peace,

prosperity, sustainability and European rights and values. Friends of Europe published '10 Policy Choices for a Renewed Social Contract for Europe' in February 2024. Our objective is to shift mindsets and behaviours towards addressing social problems and to offer actionable policy choices to the leaders of today and tomorrow.



**Global Health Advocates** is a French NGO whose mission is to carry out political advocacy in France and with the EU institutions to ensure policies and resources are effectively addressing health inequalities.



**The Lifelong Learning Platform** is an umbrella that gathers 44 European organisations active in the field of education, training and youth, coming from all over Europe and beyond. Currently these networks represent more than 50 000 educational institutions and associations covering all sectors of formal, non-formal and informal learning. Their members reach out to several millions of beneficiaries.



**The Europe Central-Africa Network (EurAc)**, created in 2003, serves as the umbrella organisation of over 30 non-governmental organisations and networks, working closely with civil society from the Great Lakes Region in Central Africa, and supporting their efforts in building a better future. The network is active in the areas of peace and security, human rights as well as sustainable management of natural resources. EurAc carries out advocacy work for a strong, coherent and sustainable engagement by the European Union (EU) and its Member States (MS), integrated into a regional approach.

# Annex 1

## Model mission letter: Commissioner for International Partnerships

**I would like to entrust you with the role of Commissioner for International Partnerships.**

Commitment to the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, including global inequality reduction and furthering the wellbeing of people and the planet should be at the heart of your mission backed up by the requisite funding. In your work, you should regard civil society as a genuine partner while ensuring policy coherence for sustainable development.

- You will ensure the Commission's development policy objectives, as set out in the Treaties, remain at the heart of the International Partnerships portfolio.
- You will promote equitable partnerships for the sustainable development of partner countries, in line with the 2030 Agenda and SDGs, ensuring transparency, accountability and fairness in EU decision-making regarding international, regional, and bilateral relations.
- You should prioritise global inequality reduction by addressing its root causes, including by focusing policies on the experiences and demands of discriminated groups, marginalised communities and fragile countries. You will work to ensure that all EU programmes benefit to a larger extent the poorest 40 percent of people. To achieve this objective, you will coordinate your work closely with Commissioners for Economy, Trade and Agriculture.
- You will firmly prioritise the wellbeing of people and the planet in decision-making, focusing on human development and human security, environmental integrity and long-term peace to create equitable societies, in collaboration with the High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy (HR/VP).
- I want you to continue to recognise civil society as a key strategic partner, and commit to structured dialogue at all policy stages, ensuring transparency, accountability, and autonomy in the process. You will also defend civic space, human rights and democracy by actively using resources to prevent the shrinking of CSO funding and civic space.
- I want you to embed human rights and gender equality as cornerstones of EU external action, and ensure dignity and respect for all individuals by fully and comprehensively implementing the Gender Action Plan III, the Human Rights and Democracy Action Plan, and the LGBTIQ+ and disability rights strategies, as well as other rights-based agendas. You will work with the HR/VP to ensure that a rights-based approach is at the heart of our approach to our priorities, especially with regards to migration, trade and security.
- You will ensure that the EU dedicates sufficient funding for sustainable development, including especially to the least developed countries and fragile states. Our spending on sustainable development must align with the 2030 Agenda and you will be responsible for monitoring the impact of the NDICI - Global Europe on equality, including through regular consultations with civil society. In parallel, you will work to increase the transparency and accountability of funds entrusted to all partners and ensure that the proposals for future funding instruments and priorities align with the priorities highlighted in this mission letter.
- You will commit to policy coherence for sustainable development at the leadership level and regularly contribute to the Commission's impact assessments following a dedicated plan that includes institutional mechanisms to assess and address the impact of EU policies on partner countries. You will work closely with your colleagues in the College to identify and address instances where the EU has unfair practices that affect partner countries disproportionately or negatively.

As a rule, you will work in coordination with the High Representative/Vice-President. The Directorate-General for International Partnerships will support you in your work.

## Annex 2

### Model mission letter:

# High Representative of the Union for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy / Vice-President of the European Commission

**You will be the High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy and Vice-President of the European Commission.**

In light of an erosion of multilateralism, the EU must remain true to its own principles in external affairs, as guaranteed by the Treaties. The commitments to peace, human rights, human security and gender equality should guide our external action to ensure dignity and respect for all individuals. In promoting a rules-based world order, we must embrace a decolonial approach that favours collaboration over competition and promotes civic space globally.

I will extend my support to you in your role as Commission Vice-President in charge of coordinating the external action of the European Union, in line with Article 18(4) of the Treaty. You will also support me in coordinating the external dimension of all Commissioners' work and ensure that we link the internal and external aspects of our policies better.

- You will include the principles underpinning the feminist foreign policy in the EU's external action in order to address contemporary security challenges, including the rising tensions between and within states. In this work, you will promote human rights by embedding gender equality, disability rights and LGBTQI+ rights as cornerstones of EU external action to ensure dignity and respect for all.
- While embracing a decolonial approach, you will ensure that our partnerships with countries around the world are equitable and transparent, that they shift from a spirit of competition and transaction to collaboration and transformation, while promoting shared power and resources and addressing historical injustices.
- I want you to ensure that the Gender Action Plan (GAP III) is fully implemented across all areas of the EU's external action.
- You should defend civic space, human rights and democracy while recognising civil society as a key strategic partner. This work will require maintaining accountability and transparency while promoting an open civic space.
- Your role will include ensuring a greater coherence between our internal and external policies. You will work closely with all Members of the College to achieve this. You will ensure the Commission identifies and addresses where the EU has unfair practices that negatively affect the EU's multilateral influence and relations with partner countries, especially in relation to our priorities such as trade, climate, economic resilience, security and migration.
- You will lead the EU's efforts to reinvigorate multilateralism and the rules-based international order to make them just and fit for the 21st century by engaging closely in key international fora, such as the UN and the WTO.
- You will be invited to provide weekly updates on foreign policy to the College in order to inform our discussion and to make external action a systemic part of our decision-making.

As Vice-President of the Commission, you will work under my guidance on all of the above issues. The Secretariat-General will support you in your role as Vice-President and will continue to be the main interface for the European External Action Service. The Service for Foreign Policy Instruments will also support you in your work.