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European Union

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Subject:	Strengthening Team Europe's commitment to Human Development - Council conclusions (14 June 2021)
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Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on strengthening Team Europe's commitment to Human Development, as adopted by the Council at its 3802nd meeting held on 14 June 2021.

Strengthening Team Europe's commitment to Human Development**Council conclusions**

1. The Council reiterates that human development is essential for the eradication of poverty and the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs), including by ensuring that no one is left behind. Engagement in human development is therefore a central element of EU external action and of international partnerships, in line with the New European Consensus on Development and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development.
2. The Council highlights the need for a renewed focus on the support for and the advancement of human development across EU external engagement. This requires both strong political leadership and joint efforts, especially where needs are greatest. At the same time, there are opportunities to pursue EU interests and values, while supporting effective multilateralism with the United Nations (UN) at its core.
3. The Council recognises the added value and mutually beneficial potential of promoting human development as a key component of EU's development approach in the current geopolitical context, while fully recognising that development is driven by the priorities and ownership of partner countries. The Council therefore supports a strengthened Team Europe approach to human development.
4. Noting that the COVID-19 pandemic and its socioeconomic consequences, including in terms of rising food insecurity and malnutrition in all its forms, represent an unprecedented shock to human development, jeopardising gains achieved in the last decades, exacerbating inequalities and undermining social cohesion, the Council recalls that sustainable recovery efforts should be human-centred and leave no one behind, aiming to 'build back better and greener', while applying a human rights-based approach.

5. Acknowledging that human rights, gender equality and non-discrimination are cornerstones of human development, the Council recognises the need to pay particular attention to the enjoyment of all human rights and the participation of, inter alia, youth, girls and women, persons with disabilities and LGBTI persons, as well as to the protection of those who are in disadvantaged, vulnerable and marginalised situations, including children.
6. The Council recognises that health and education are key building blocks of human development, which also depends on other basic social services, such as food security and nutrition, water, sanitation and hygiene, and social protection. The Council stresses the need to pay special attention to the diets that children and adolescents need in order to grow and develop to their full potential, including through school health and nutrition programmes. The Council acknowledges that systemic support for the health and education sectors in particular is crucial to ensuring prevention and recovery, strengthening resilience, promoting stability and sustainable growth and mitigating the long-term impact of the pandemic on income loss and poverty. The Council recognises the need to focus on low income and fragile countries in that regard.
7. Recognising the multidimensional nature of human development, the Council further stresses the importance of addressing interlinkages with other priorities and areas, inter alia, social protection, good governance, climate change, green economy, youth, jobs, digital for development (D4D) and the triple nexus. Furthermore, the Council recognises the critical role played by civil society in delivering human development outcomes.
8. The Council calls for comprehensive action to strengthen health systems and achieve universal health coverage (UHC), including equitable access to quality, effective, inclusive and affordable health services. The Council further stresses the need to promote societies that enable people to live healthy lives, promoting public health beyond the health sector.

9. The Council recalls that the EU remains committed for more efforts and actions to ensure the promotion, protection and fulfilment of all human rights and to the full and effective implementation of the Beijing Platform for Action and the Programme of Action of the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and the outcomes of their review conferences and remains committed to sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), in this context. Having that in mind, the EU reaffirms its commitment to the promotion, protection and fulfilment of the right of every individual to have full control over, and decide freely and responsibly on matters related to their sexuality and sexual and reproductive health, free from discrimination, coercion and violence. The EU further stresses the need for universal access to quality and affordable comprehensive sexual and reproductive health information, education, including comprehensive sexuality education, and health-care services.
10. The Council also underlines the importance of the reinforcement of partners' preparedness, resilience and response capacity against health threats and support to global health security, including through the One Health approach. In this context, the Council welcomes the newly created One Health High-Level Expert Panel. Furthermore, the Council recalls the opportunity provided by the Global Health Summit and the World Health Assembly to share lessons learned from the COVID-19 pandemic and develop principles for further multilateral cooperation and joint action to prevent future global health crises.
11. The Council emphasises the importance of ensuring universal, equitable, quality and affordable access to essential medicines, vaccines and health technologies for all, notably through the EU and Member States' continued support to the Access to COVID-19 Tools Accelerator (ACT-A), COVAX as the main instrument to ensure equitable distribution of safe and effective vaccines against COVID-19, supported by the EU Vaccine Sharing Mechanism and through bilateral, country and regional level support. In addition, the Council supports the strengthening of capacities of partner countries to roll-out vaccination campaigns.

12. The Council calls for comprehensive, well-coordinated and effective global, regional and country level support to strengthening education systems in line with partner country needs and priorities, including by financing through global partnerships, such as the Global Partnership for Education. The Council also calls for support in ensuring the completion of free, equitable and quality pre-primary, primary, secondary and higher education, as a prerequisite for the future prospects of young people, especially girls and those living in marginalised communities and vulnerable situations, such as refugees and displaced persons. Promoting the development of technical and vocational skills through adequate vocational, education and training (VET) systems throughout the life-cycle is key for boosting entrepreneurship and sustainable job creation.
13. The Council also underlines the need to improve the quality of education at all levels to ensure relevant and effective learning outcomes to unlock the transformative power of education, by supporting teachers and ensuring learners, particularly girls and those furthest behind, gain essential foundational skills and digital skills.
14. The Council calls upon the Commission and the EEAS to take concrete and measurable commitments to increase financial support to health, education, social protection and other basic social services, so as to reach the spending target of at least 20% of official development assistance (ODA) for human development and social inclusion in the new European Consensus on Development, as well as the targets under the upcoming Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI) – Global Europe. The Council invites Member States to join in these efforts.
15. The Council calls upon the Commission, the EEAS and Member States to further intensify efforts to jointly achieve gender equality in external action by 2030 and by working towards achieving the relevant target under the upcoming NDICI – Global Europe, and takes note, in this light, of the Joint Communication of the European Commission and the High Representative on the third Gender Action Plan (GAP).

16. The Council highlights the importance of the Working Better Together and Team Europe approaches to achieve transformative impact through programming and Team Europe Initiatives (TEI) and to improve the effectiveness, coordination and accountability of global aid initiatives and funds, including by the UN and the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund. Against this background, the Council calls upon the Commission, the EEAS and Member States to achieve measurable and structured progress in making the EU, in a Team Europe approach, the leading global partner in human development.
17. The Council encourages the Commission, the EEAS and Member States to take a multi-stakeholder approach, making full use of the EU toolbox, inter alia political and policy dialogue, peer-to-peer knowledge sharing, technical assistance and public sector expertise (through Twinning and TAIEX), budget support and innovative financial instruments, such as the upcoming European Fund for Sustainable Development + (EFSD+).
18. The Council emphasises the need to integrate ambitious social, environmental and climate objectives in policy dialogue, financing strategies and actions, such as the Global Recovery Initiative, in order to ‘build back better and greener’ and contribute to aligning all available resources on the SDGs and fund social and economic measures in support of a sustainable recovery from the COVID-19 crisis, with due consideration to debt sustainability issues. Supporting public finance management and domestic resource mobilisation also play a key role in this context.
19. The Council further calls on the Commission, the EEAS and Member States to draw and share lessons learned from investing in human development, highlighting the annual contribution of the UN Human Development Report. The Council stresses the importance of taking action to enhance monitoring, evaluation, evidence-based knowledge management and accountability, to increase the collection of age, disability and sex-disaggregated data, as well as to ensure effective communication and visibility of EU efforts.
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