

Brussels, 14 July 2020

Subject: Humanitarian Aid in the next Multiannual Financial Framework and Next Generation EU fund

Dear Presidents of the European Council, Commission and Council of the European Union,

I am writing to you ahead of this week's Summit on behalf of the VOICE network of 88 European non-governmental organisations (NGOs) supporting the delivery of principled and people centred humanitarian aid, to urge you to consider all that you can to support COVID-19 affected communities around the world.

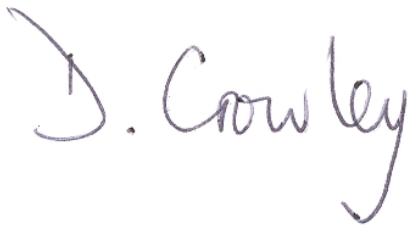
Humanitarian needs have more than doubled over the course of the current Multiannual Financial Framework (MFF). Conflicts, climate change and natural disasters, and the lack of political solutions to many crises have resulted in a record level and protraction of displacement and a seemingly inexorably growing level of basic needs. People are often left with nothing but aid. In response, the EU has been a key donor – supporting the Red Cross movement, United Nations and NGOs to provide life-saving assistance that restores basic dignity to those with nowhere else to turn. However, the EU has not increased its support in a manner proportionate to the increase in needs – while Eurobarometers consistently show that EU citizens continue to support EU aid in overwhelming numbers. In recognition of this, in 2018 the European Commission proposed an increase to the humanitarian aid budget line for the next MFF. Member States and the European Parliament have supported this.

Then came COVID-19. The direct and indirect consequences of the pandemic are creating deep socio-economic damage that will be felt acutely in the years to come. The warning signs for hunger are there already. In many contexts, COVID-19 and its impacts have come on top of existing needs driven by complex crises. Recognising that the pandemic is depleting vulnerable communities' resilience – in some contexts reversing years of development gains, the European Commission proposed that €5 billion from the Next Generation EU fund would go towards humanitarian assistance. This funding was a recognition that this pandemic and its effects are global and that any response to it needs to bear this in mind. In the words of the UN Secretary General, António Guterres, "In an interconnected world, none of us is safe until all of us are safe".

President Michel has proposed to reallocate this €5bn away from humanitarian assistance entirely. We would urge that this decision be reconsidered at the Summit. Allocated to humanitarian assistance, this recovery and resilience funding could go directly to helping get children back into school and vaccinated, to preparing communities for pandemics and other disasters, and to supporting social safety nets and basic water and sanitation.

The EU has three instruments it can use to spend emergency, resilience and recovery funding. The humanitarian aid budget line, the Solidarity and Emergency Aid Reserve and the rapid response pillar in the proposed Neighbourhood, Development and International Cooperation Instrument (NDICI). The VOICE network calls on Member States to acknowledge the depth of the COVID-19 crisis and the additional suffering of already vulnerable communities around the world and to take this opportunity to restore an additional €5bn allocation to humanitarian aid.

Yours sincerely,



Dominic Crowley
VOICE President.

To:

European Council President Charles Michel

President of the European Commission Ursula von der Leyen

Chancellor Angela Merkel, German Presidency of the European Union

Cc:

Commissioner for Crisis Management Janez Lenarčič

Commissioner for Budget and Administration Johannes Hahn

European Parliament President David Sassoli

European Parliament, Chair of Development Committee Tomas Tobé

European Parliament Standing rapporteur on humanitarian aid Norbert Neuser

European Parliament, Chair of Foreign Affairs Committee David McAllister.