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From:	General Secretariat of the Council
To:	Delegations
Subject:	Advancing mutually beneficial partnerships through better financing, gender equality, global health, and trade - Council conclusions (15 December 2025)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on Advancing mutually beneficial partnerships through better financing, gender equality, global health, and trade, as approved by the Council at its 4145th meeting held on 15 December 2025.

**Council conclusions on advancing mutually beneficial partnerships through better financing,
gender equality, global Health, and trade**

(Without prejudice to the negotiations of the next Multiannual Financial Framework)

Financing International Partnerships

1. The Council acknowledges that investing in international partnerships results in a stronger, safer, resilient and more globally connected Europe and that financing international partnerships remains a cornerstone of the EU's global agenda and foreign policy objectives. The EU's international partnerships support sustainable economic, social and environmental development in partner countries with the primary aim of eradicating poverty, contribute to preserving a rules-based global order and help promoting European interests, in accordance with its Strategic Agenda 2024-2029 for a prosperous and competitive Europe. The Council underlines that the EU is committed to remaining a reliable, value-based and stable partner in achieving sustainable development, and in establishing mutually beneficial partnerships.
2. The Council recalls the commitment by the EU and its Member States to achieve the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development and its 17 SDGs, the objectives of the Paris Agreement, and the goals and targets of the Kunming-Montreal Global Biodiversity Framework, and the Pact for the Future.
3. The EU will continue to engage with partner countries to deliver relevant solutions in the short and the long term through development cooperation, including via the EU Global Gateway Strategy and its 360-degree approach. Building mutually beneficial partnerships requires broad and meaningful cooperation through development cooperation as well as trade and investments, as well as political and security dialogue, recognising that partner countries have the primary responsibility for their national development. Complementarity with humanitarian assistance must also be ensured in accordance with the humanitarian-development-peace nexus. Sustainable approaches towards more coherence between development and migration policy, in line with EU and international law, should be

developed, including by addressing the root causes of irregular migration in a sustainable manner.

4. Moving forward, and taking into account the outcome of the 4th International Conference on Financing for Development in Seville in June-July 2025, the Council reiterates the importance of financing for sustainable development and the effective use of all available sources of financing – public and private, domestic and international – to bridge the financing gap. The Council underlines the importance of working towards coordinated public and private efforts and innovative financing mechanisms, acknowledging the catalytic role of Official Development Assistance (ODA) in mobilising additional resources through domestic resource mobilisation, blended finance and sustainable private investment. The Council emphasises the importance of supporting partner countries in creating the fiscal space needed to accelerate investments that improve people’s lives and create decent jobs, while ensuring debt sustainability, fostering attractive investment conditions, mobilising the private sector as well as combatting corruption and illicit financial flows.
5. The Council calls for the effective implementation of the reform of the international financial architecture, including the multilateral development banks, in order to mobilise more financing for reaching the SDGs through a multilateral system that is less fragmented and more efficient, impactful and resilient to present and future challenges and crises.
6. The Council emphasises that the EU’s external financing must be fit for purpose and supportive of the EU’s global role in an evolving global landscape marked by uncertainty, strategic and economic competition, fragility, rising levels of conflict and persistent crises. It must allow the EU to strengthen its geopolitical and geo-economic influence, pursue a renewed approach to international cooperation, address global challenges and contribute to the provision of global public goods by fostering value-based, mutually beneficial partnerships. Moreover, the EU should continue to play a vital role in the ongoing UN-80 reform process and safeguard the international rules-based order with the UN at its core. It must also ensure that the EU tailors its offer to the needs of partner countries, including Least Developed Countries, Small Island Developing States and fragile countries, and work in a more integrated manner through a Team Europe approach, underlining the importance and role of EU Delegations and the ability of every Member State to contribute meaningfully to the joint European offer to partner countries.

Implementation of the EU Global Health Strategy

7. The Council welcomes the first report on the implementation of the EU Global Health Strategy and reaffirms the leading role of the EU and its Member States in advancing global health together with partners based on solidarity, humanity, equity, gender equality and upholding human rights for all. It recognises that diseases cross borders and can have a cross-sectoral impact. Worldwide access to a full range of essential health services and reliable health information is therefore critical to Europe's health security, well-being and socio-economic stability. This engagement should also rely on the One Health approach recognising the interconnection between human, animal and environmental health as well as the recognition of the increasing impact of climate change on global health.
8. The Council confirms the strategic importance of the EU Global Health Strategy and its three main priorities focusing on health and well-being, health systems strengthening and universal health coverage and fighting health threats as well as of ensuring equitable access to quality health services, including sexual and reproductive health and rights as per the New European Consensus on Development. The Council welcomes the ongoing work to establish a comprehensive framework for follow-up, results and impact.
9. The EU and its Member States make substantial contributions to improve global health through actions and partnerships across different sectors and at all levels. This includes promoting universal access to vaccines and medicines as well as access to health technologies, respecting international rules. It also includes combating communicable- and non-communicable diseases, notably through substantive cooperation, within available possibilities, with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other UN entities, including UNFPA, UNAIDS and UNICEF, as well as major global health initiatives and mechanisms such as Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance, the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, the Global Polio Eradication Initiative (GPEI), Unitaïd, the International Vaccine Institute (IVI) and the Pandemic Fund. It stresses the need for continued sustainable financing in line with relevant realignment and prioritisation processes as well as for enhanced accountability and transparency, stronger preparedness and the use of digital health solutions to strengthen global health systems.

10. The Council calls on the EU and its Member States to continue implementing the EU Global Health Strategy and ensure its continued relevance in the evolving global health landscape and for global health security. This includes strengthening collective impact as a global and regional actor, including through the Global Gateway Strategy and Team Europe Initiatives, contributing constructively to the reform agendas of the global health architecture including the Lusaka Agenda and the WHO re-prioritisation process as well as emphasising strong collaboration between all actors to increase efficiency and drive synergies. The Council remains concerned about the significant negative impact on global health security and health outcomes for some of the world's most marginalised communities, as a result of dramatic reductions in financing for global health. In this context, the Council stresses the importance of ensuring the EU is adapting to the new environment, including reprioritising and refocusing as needed, while striving to sustain measures to deliver health equity for the furthest behind. The Council reaffirms the EU's strong commitment to working with all stakeholders, including the WHO, which is at the core of the global health architecture, in pushing forward the EU Global Health Strategy and jointly making further progress.

Evaluation of the Gender Action Plan III

11. The Council takes note of the outcome of the independent evaluation of the EU Gender Action Plan (GAP) III. The evaluation confirms the strategic importance of the GAP III, which had been adopted by the Commission and the European Union's High Representative, and welcomed through Presidency Conclusions, and its role to continue significantly increasing the strategic importance of gender equality in the EU's external action. As gender equality and women and girls' rights, including their sexual and reproductive health and rights (SRHR), are facing unprecedented levels of opposition globally, the Council reaffirms its commitment to globally advance gender equality, women's empowerment and SRHR, as per the New European Consensus on Development, and in cooperation with partner governments, civil society and private sector.

12. The EU remains committed to 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 the 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 also 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.
13. The Council acknowledges the preparation of a fourth Gender Action Plan (GAP IV) [by the Commission and the European Union's High Representative]. The GAP IV should demonstrate continued commitment and leadership by setting concrete targets. The GAP IV should continue to promote gender equality and SRHR, as per the New European Consensus on Development, as well as the rights of all women and girls and LGBTI persons through transformative approaches that address the root causes of gender inequality, multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination and applying a human rights-based approach. The GAP IV should contribute to creating safe environments for women human rights defenders and LGBTI persons. GAP IV should also continue to tackle gender stereotypes, the root causes of gender inequalities and discrimination against women and girls, with a special focus on the most disadvantaged, including persons with disabilities. The GAP IV should recall the EU's commitment to support women's and youth's equal, full, effective and meaningful participation and leadership, in all their diversity, and in all spheres and levels of public and political life, as per the EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2027, the strengthening of the economic and social rights of all women and girls, the implementation of the women, peace and security agenda and the elimination of all forms of sexual and gender-based violence. These commitments should all continue to be reflected in the EU's financing instruments for external action.

Annual Report on EU Development Aid Targets

14. The Council welcomes the Commission's annual analysis on EU Development Aid targets and wishes to report the following to the European Council:
- a) In 2024, the EU and its Member States accounted for 42% of global Official Development Assistance (ODA)¹, and thereby continued to consolidate their leadership on the global agenda for sustainable development as the largest global provider of ODA.
 - b) EU collective ODA² represented 0.50% of EU Gross National Income (GNI) in 2024, corresponding to EUR 88.7 billion. This constitutes a decrease compared to its 0.56% share of EU GNI of 2023 (EUR 95.5 billion).
 - c) EU collective ODA to Least Developed Countries (LDCs)³ represented 0.12% of EU GNI in 2023, corresponding to EUR 20.0 billion. This constitutes an increase compared to its 0.10% share of EU GNI of 2022 (EUR 15.3 billion).
15. The Council continues to -encourage all Member States to progress towards achieving their individual targets as well as the EU's collective commitment to providing 0.7% of the GNI as ODA⁴, and 0.20% as ODA to LDCs by 2030. The Council also encourages Member States to ensure that an appropriate share of their ODA, for example 10%, is devoted to humanitarian action, on the basis of existing humanitarian needs.

¹ Based on preliminary information on 2024 ODA data from the OECD-DAC. Global ODA is defined here as including the ODA provided by the EU collectively and all other DAC and non-DAC donor countries reporting to the OECD.

² Based on preliminary information on 2024 ODA data from the OECD-DAC. EU collective ODA is measured on a grant equivalent basis and represents the sum of ODA from the EU Member States and the proportion of ODA provided by the EU Institutions that is not imputed to Member States or to non-EU donors such as the United Kingdom.

³ Based on 2023 ODA data from the OECD-DAC. EU collective ODA to LDCs includes EU Member States' bilateral net ODA to LDCs, imputed multilateral ODA to LDCs and regional net ODA known to benefit LDCs as well as EU Institutions' regional net ODA known to benefit LDCs (not including the UK share).

⁴ Member States that joined the EU after 2002 committed to increasing their ODA/GNI ratio to 0.33%.

16. The Council confirms the EU's readiness to contribute actively to shaping an international development cooperation and humanitarian system that is fully equipped to addressing today's global challenges. In this regard, the Council calls for international partnerships that make effective use of all sources of financing for sustainable development, including and beyond ODA, to optimise the impact of resources and to support the development agenda of partner countries, including least developed and fragile countries. The Council underlines the importance of a better and more systematic measurement of impact as well as inclusive data collection and transparent reporting on all official sources of financing, including resources mobilised from the private sector, through the OECD's Creditor Reporting System (in particular ODA), Total Official Support for Sustainable Development (TOSSD), or the International Aid Transparency Initiative (IATI).

European Court of Auditors Special Report on Aid for Trade

17. The Council welcomes the Special Report No 17/2025 by the European Court of Auditors and commends the Commission for accepting the Court's recommendations. The Council broadly agrees with the replies of the Commission to the findings and recommendations included in the Court's report.
18. Aid for Trade is an important part of development finance and aligns with the Global Gateway Strategy, including through investments in economic infrastructure and productive capacity development. The EU and its Member States remain the world's biggest contributor to Aid for Trade, accounting collectively for approximately 22.2 billion EUR in 2022 and representing 36% of all Aid for Trade from bilateral and multilateral sources.
19. The Council confirms that the EU will remain committed to supporting partner countries in tackling trade-related obstacles, strengthening their capacity to trade and to negotiate and apply international trade rules, supporting regional integration processes as well as building the infrastructure they need to integrate into the international trading system. The Council also reiterates *its commitment to supporting an enabling environment for trade and investment to advance mutually beneficial partnerships and sustainable development*, noting the need for more targeted efforts toward Least Developed Countries (LDCs).