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Subject: EU Global Health Strategy – Better health for all in a changing world
- Council conclusions (29 January 2024)

Delegations will find in the annex the Council conclusions on the EU Global Health Strategy – Better health for all in a changing world, as approved by the Council at its 4003rd meeting held on 29 January 2024.

**Council conclusions on the EU Global Health Strategy
– Better health for all in a changing world**

1. The Council of the European Union welcomes the Communication from the Commission on the EU Global Health Strategy – Better Health for All in a Changing World.¹ The Council 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 respect for human rights.
2. The Council acknowledges that the highest attainable standard of physical and mental health is a human right and underlines that health is a prerequisite for sustainable development, with important implications for the safety, stability and prosperity of all societies, including within the EU. The Council recognises that achieving gender equality, fighting harmful gender stereotypes, tackling stigma and discrimination are paramount to achieving good health for all. Global health requires effective multilateralism and inclusive multistakeholder partnerships and is an essential pillar of EU external policy, integral to strengthening the rules-based international order. The Council further emphasises that the EU and its Member States must play a leading role to ensure that global health remains at the top of the international agenda.

¹ 15585/22 - COM(2022)675: Communication from the Commission: EU Global Health Strategy – Better Health for All in a Changing World

3. The Council stresses that the lessons from the COVID-19 pandemic and other health emergencies, global health trends, the triple planetary crisis of climate change, biodiversity loss and pollution and a rapidly changing geopolitical environment point to the need for a renewed approach to global health to promote and protect health by preventing, preparing for and combatting global health threats and ensuring health security, strengthening health systems and advancing Universal Health Coverage, and addressing the determinants of health and promoting healthy lives and well-being, in line with the 2030 Agenda and its Sustainable Development Goals.
4. The Council recalls the 2010 Commission Communication² and the Council conclusions on the EU's role in Global Health³, and underlines the EU's significant contributions to saving lives and promoting health, through political leadership, financial contributions and technical expertise. Global health is a pillar of the Global Gateway⁴ and a central theme across the EU's global, regional and bilateral partnerships, including through the Global Approach to Research and Innovation⁵ and several Team Europe Initiatives. The Council remains committed to policy coherence and a human rights-based approach and further acknowledges that EU contributions to global health go beyond the health sector, including in areas such as peace and security, agriculture, climate and environment, education, research and innovation, nutrition and food security, social protection, trade and water, sanitation and hygiene (WASH).

² 8281/10 - COM(2010)128: Communication from the Commission: The EU Role in Global Health

³ 9644/10 - Council conclusions on the EU role in Global Health

⁴ 14675/21 - JOIN(2021)30: Joint Communication: The Global Gateway

⁵ 8979/21 - COM(2021)252: Communication on the Global Approach to Research and Innovation

5. The Council recalls that recent Council conclusions have called for strengthening multilateralism⁶, emphasised global health in the context of strengthening the European Health Union⁷, underlined the leading, coordinating and normative role of the World Health Organization (WHO) in global health⁸, highlighted the importance of taking a One Health approach⁸, addressing antimicrobial resistance⁹ and ensuring access to WASH¹⁰, stressed the interlinkage between health, well-being and economic growth¹¹, committed to protecting all children¹² and promoting the inclusion and engagement of youth¹³, expressed the EU's ambition to be climate neutral by 2050¹⁴ and called for countering disinformation¹⁵. The Council further recalls the principle of leaving no-one behind, equality and the New European Consensus on Development¹⁶ emphasising global health as part of the EU's response to the 2030 Agenda, and that 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 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.

⁶ 10341/19 - Council conclusions on EU action to strengthen rules-based multilateralism

⁷ 14886/21 - Council conclusions on strengthening the European Health Union

⁸ 12957/20 - Council conclusions on the role of the EU in strengthening the WHO

⁹ 9112/20 - Council conclusions on the European Court of Auditors' Special Report No 21/2019

¹⁰ 13440/21 - Council conclusions on water in the EU's External Action

¹¹ 13432/19 - Council conclusions on the Economy of Wellbeing

¹² 10024/22 - Council conclusions on the EU Strategy on the rights of the child

¹³ 8629/20 - Council conclusions on youth in external action

¹⁴ 5263/21 - Council conclusions on Climate and Energy Diplomacy: Delivering on the external dimension of the European Green Deal

¹⁵ 14064/20 - Council conclusions on strengthening resilience and countering hybrid threats, including disinformation in the context of the COVID- 19 pandemic

¹⁶ 10108/17 - The New European Consensus on Development (2017): 'Our World, Our Dignity, Our Future'

Efforts should be guided by the EU Action Plan on Human rights and Democracy 2020-2024,¹⁷ the Council conclusions on the Youth Action Plan in EU external action¹⁸ and the Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities¹⁹. The Council notes that the European Commission has adopted gender equality²⁰ and LGBTIQ²¹ strategies, as well as the third Gender Action Plan (GAP) “An ambitious Agenda for Gender Equality and Women’s Empowerment in EU External Action 2021-2025”, welcomed through Presidency Conclusions.

6. The Council emphasises that the EU and its Member States, within their respective mandates and competences must seize the opportunity to strengthen their impact as a global and regional actor to contribute concretely and measurably to a healthier and safer world, including in fragile, crisis- and conflict-affected settings. In this context, the Council calls for increased ambition, taking a comprehensive approach, from a focus on saving lives and reducing the emergence and spread of diseases to also promoting health and well-being, including mental health and fighting discrimination and stigma, particularly for women and girls, children and youth, older persons, persons with disabilities, LGBTI persons, indigenous peoples and persons and communities in vulnerable and marginalised situations, as well as migrant and displaced populations. The Council commits to combating multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination to ensure a human rights-based approach and to tackle inequalities. The three complementary priorities of the Strategy should guide these efforts:

- a) **Deliver better health and well-being of people across the life course** – to enable people to avoid disease and remain healthy – including action on health determinants across sectors and societies, from climate and environment to education and WASH, addressing poverty, inequality and gender inequality, preventing and responding to humanitarian crises, improving access to safe, sufficient, nutritious and healthy diets and addressing tobacco use and harmful alcohol consumption as risk factors for disease and mortality;

¹⁷ 7029/20 - JOIN(2020)5: EU Action Plan on Human Rights and Democracy 2020-2024

¹⁸ 15322/22 - Council conclusions on the Youth Action Plan in EU external action

¹⁹ 6268/21 - COM(2021)101: Union of Equality: Strategy for the Rights of Persons with Disabilities 2021-2030

²⁰ 6678/20 - COM(2020)152: A Union of Equality: Gender Equality Strategy 2020–2025

²¹ 13081/20 - COM(2020)698: Union of Equality: LGBTIQ Equality Strategy 2020-2025

- b) **Strengthen health systems and advance universal health coverage** – to improve equitable access to quality, accessible, acceptable and available health services including sexual and reproductive health care services – with a focus on primary healthcare, community participation and engagement, essential public health functions, research and digitalisation, a skilled and sufficient health workforce, equitable access to affordable quality health products including through local manufacturing and adequate and sustainable health financing including by promoting domestic health financing, boosting transparency, accountability and integrity and fighting corruption;
- c) **Prevent and combat health threats, including pandemics, applying a One Health approach** – to avoid and mitigate future health crises and their health, social and economic consequences – inter alia through enhanced resilience and effective prevention, preparedness and response mechanisms including integrated and collaborative surveillance and monitoring, a strengthened public health workforce and improved access to medical countermeasures and voluntary transfer of technology, filling gaps in global governance, a legally binding pandemic agreement²² and strengthened International Health Regulations, stepping up the fight against antimicrobial resistance and ensuring leadership at national, regional and global levels.

²² Council Decision (EU) 2022/451, WHA Decision SSA2(5)

7. The Council notes that the Strategy represents a new paradigm that engages all relevant areas of external policy, with an important link to internal policies. Its successful implementation requires an innovative, integrated, coordinated and evidence-based approach, new and different ways of thinking and working, addressing knowledge gaps and achieving coherence between domestic and international EU actions. This includes strengthening the multilateral system and accelerating equitable and mutually beneficial global, regional and bilateral partnerships based on solidarity, co- ownership and co-responsibility, promoting preparedness, resilience and open strategic autonomy and taking a multi-sectoral, health in all policies approach involving all relevant policy areas and instruments available. The Council underlines the need to collectively enhance financing for global health at global, regional and national level, including through grants and innovative financing, supporting domestic resource mobilisation in partner countries and promoting open and predictable trade. In this regard, the Council reiterates the commitment to contribute at least 20 % of the ODA funded under the regulation NDICI-Global Europe to social inclusion and human development.
8. The Council welcomes the Strategy and calls on the Commission, the High Representative and the Member States, within their respective mandates and competences, to apply the guiding principles and implement as appropriate the lines of action and initiatives proposed in it, including by:
- a) taking concrete action to promote global health across relevant sectors, including public health, climate and environment, research and innovation, digitalisation, education, social protection, water and sanitation, agriculture and food systems, anti-corruption, trade, international development cooperation, civil protection mechanisms and humanitarian assistance and across all relevant EU budget financing instruments and financial institutions, implementing a health in all policies approach and promoting synergies with relevant EU frameworks, initiatives and policies; and enhancing a transformative approach that addresses the root causes of gender inequalities;
 - b) strengthening capacity and enhancing coordination, including through informal cooperation, to boost the efficiency and impact of initiatives and actions, ensure that the EU and its Member States are speaking with one voice in relevant international fora and intensifying dialogue and joint communication efforts at multilateral, regional and national level;

- c) taking a proactive and constructive role to strengthen multilateral cooperation by filling existing gaps in global governance and ensuring complementarity and coherence of action, and with a strengthened and more effective, accountable and sustainably financed WHO at its core, noting that the EU seeking formal observer status at WHO could be addressed and decided upon in the relevant Council structures;
 - d) expanding bilateral, regional, trans-regional and global partnerships in line with the priorities identified in the Strategy and delivering country and regional tailor-made responses through a Team Europe approach, implementing Team Europe Initiatives, including through supporting local communities and civil society organisations, and actively engaging in outreach including political and human rights dialogues with partner countries;
 - e) regularly taking stock of progress and impact of the Strategy, starting no later than 2024.
9. Throughout the implementation of the Strategy, the Council calls for the continuous involvement of civil society, academia, the private sector, the EIB and EBRD and other European development banks and financial institutions, the UN system including WHO, and other relevant actors, Gavi, the Vaccine Alliance and the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria in delivering on the Strategy's objectives and priorities.
10. The Council further invites the Commission services and the EEAS to:
- a) develop a coherent EU global health diplomacy, building on and making best use of existing capacities, based on the Team Europe approach, in coordination with Member States;
 - b) augment global health capacity in key EU Delegations, including by considering the secondment of national experts;
 - c) monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of the Strategy using an integrated and participatory framework to be developed in close cooperation with Member States and building on existing monitoring and evaluation tools and enhanced efforts to collect age- and sex-disaggregated data, prepare progress reports and convene annual meetings to discuss progress, including the Global Health Policy Forum.