



## Prioritising Global Health in the French Presidency of the European Council

France and the European Union (EU) are central players in global health, including in the Covid-19 response. As bilateral and multilateral health donors, founding members of critical initiatives like the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, TB and Malaria and the ACT-Accelerator, as WHO champions, and as leaders in the May 2021 Global Health Summit, both France and the EU have demonstrated their global health leadership. France also initiated vaccine-sharing, supported the development of health production capacities in low-and-middle-income countries (LMICS), and promoted the political message that Covid-19 medical tools are a global public good. However, despite significant efforts made by the international community to respond to the crisis, equitable access Covid-19 products has not materialized, and weak health systems continue to struggle. It is more urgent than ever to strengthen solidarity and the international health architecture. The EU must speak with one voice and seize this opportunity to model its values by taking concrete steps towards ensuring equity.

We welcome France choosing global health as one of its priorities during its Presidency of the Council, from January to June 2022. **We invite France to translate this political support into concrete actions to improve coherency, free up fiscal space for the strengthening of health systems, support universal health coverage (UHC), and renew support for research and innovation that enshrines equitable access to health products and technologies into its design. The French Presidency can do this by:**

### 1. Championing global health as a central part of EU external action

#### **Launch the design and adoption of a new Global Health Strategy**

The current EU Framework for global health dates back to 2010 (long before the establishment of the SDGs or the new EU Consensus on Development), and fails to comprehensively address many critical global health issues. The EU advances its global health goals through a wide range of policies, but it lacks a robust, fully-fledged strategy that would maintain health as a long-term priority, empower inter-service coordination, guide health cooperation, and increase the EU's impact, coherence, and visibility. In 2019, the Finnish Presidency of the Council initiated a multiannual Presidency Project intended to “strengthen the role of the EU in cooperation in global health,” which ends under the French presidency. We understand that the French Presidency is already drafting an “Operational Roadmap” to advance the EU's position in global health. We welcome this initiative, and believe that, in order to maximize the effectiveness of this Roadmap, civil society - especially local actors and community-led organisations - must be meaningfully engaged throughout the process. We hope that this

Roadmap will consolidate global health as a key EU priority and will set a forward-looking vision. It should guide the cross-sectoral implementation of the Consensus and tackle health challenges that are largely absent or neglected in the 2010 Framework.

### **Organise an event for the 20th anniversary of the Global Fund**

The French Presidency aligns with the 20th anniversary of the Global Fund. Since its creation, the Fund has made considerable progress in the fight against these three diseases. Unfortunately, the Covid-19 pandemic has caused alarming setbacks. The Global Fund's 7th replenishment will happen in 2023, and will be a critical moment in mitigating the devastating impacts of the pandemic. France has historically been a political and financial leader for the Global Fund, and hosted the last replenishment: a resounding success which achieved the target of \$14 billion. Under their Presidency, France should continue to lead the EU towards a renewed and ambitious commitment to this proven health instrument. Support could be displayed through an event, or a series of events, meant to mobilise Member States and the European Commission into action.

### **Organise the 2nd edition of the Global Health Summit with meaningful CSO engagement**

On May 21, 2021, the European Commission and the Italian G20 presidency coordinated the Global Health Summit, a decisive moment that allowed the adoption of the Rome Declaration. Scheduling a second edition would make it possible to reflect on progress made, adjust objectives, and launch new, concrete initiatives. Furthermore, it would be an opportunity for global leaders to bring civil society fully into the discussion, in a way that the 1st edition did not. CSOs should be invited to exchange and debate views on clear and concrete issue areas, instead of just making statements in response to general or vague questions. This would increase the opportunity for the EU to adopt effective policies, informed by constructive consultations of relevant stakeholders, especially those who are closest to people and communities that EU development aid seeks to empower. It is clear that the pandemic is not yet behind us, and preparation for the next global health crises will continue to require special attention and multilateral cooperation.

## 2. Integrating global health into on-going processes

### **Re-frame health as a central area of EU-AU partnership at the Summit and beyond**

France has called for a renewed partnership between the African and European continents. The EU-AU Summit, which will be held under the French Presidency, is an opportunity to make genuine partnership a reality. Following the Ministerial Meetings of October 26th, it is clear that health can be better integrated: firstly, by taking a human-rights and gender equality-based approach, instead of framing health as merely a lever for economic growth. Second, by integrating defined financial targets and commitments for how to commit more resources to health systems strengthening (HSS) and pandemic preparedness and response (PPR), including an action plan on how those resources will be mobilised. Fairer and more redistributive macroeconomic policies must be adopted to allow LMICs to make fiscal space for UHC, including through promoting progressive tax policies, expanding social security coverage and

contributory revenues, eliminating illicit financial flows and reducing tax exemptions, reallocating public expenditures using fiscal and central bank foreign exchange reserves, suspending and restructuring of existing debt, and new allocations of IMF Special Drawing Rights. Health should be truly multi-sectoral in the next partnership, with strong actions on nutrition, WASH, and gender equality. Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR) are notably missing from the Ministerial Communique and must be integrated into the health systems approach in a comprehensive manner.

### **Provide a global dimension to HERA**

The European Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Authority (HERA) is one of the main components of the Health Union - a set of tools that France intends to strengthen. This new framework is expected to be finalized during the EUPF. France could thus support the implementation of this new mechanism and ensure it has strong governance, accountability, and planned conditionalities. France should also strengthen the international dimension, to give HERA the necessary impact for accelerating development, and the ability to disseminate tools to combat future health threats. To contribute to the architecture of global health, HERA will need the tools to ensure equitable access to medical devices for everyone, everywhere. Many civil society organizations, particularly in France, have expressed the importance of ensuring that this new mechanism is put in place with appropriate amendments to the original proposal. [Read recommendations by 19 civil society organisations here.](#)

### **Revision of EU pharmaceutical legislation**

The EU's pharmaceutical strategy aims to make medical treatments more effective and affordable in Europe. These topics include the comprehensive review of pharmaceutical legislation, the joint development of principles for pricing, and efforts to improve transparency on R&I costs. During its Presidency, France could strengthen harmonization between member states and promote best practices. For transparency of R&I costs, France is recognized by the World Health Organisation (WHO) as a leader. It could promote alignment of European standards, and encourage a strengthening of the framework for evaluating the social impact of subsidized research. At the forefront could be the issues of antimicrobial resistance, improving accessibility to medicines, or the fight against unmet health needs.

## **3. Strengthening the impact of the EU's external action for health**

### **Establish a Team Europe Initiative (TEI) for the strengthening of health systems in Africa**

The Covid-19 pandemic has been devastating for health systems worldwide and has highlighted the need for strong systems in order to respond quickly, efficiently, and equitably to health crises. Given its historic commitment to health systems, France could take advantage of its Presidency to launch a TEI on this important topic. Considering the new NDICI/Global Europe instrument allows better alignment with local contexts through a more geographical approach, the EU must reinforce global actions in other ways. Although the Commission maintains there is an increase in the number of countries that will have health as a focal area during this budget

cycle, given the increased needs from COVID-19 and the particular economic strain that the African continent is under, it is clear that more action is needed. A TEI on HSS, which pulls together both resources, expertise, and political pressure from the EU, the EIB and Member States, would be an effective way to improve the situation. France is already one of the key Member States involved in the TEI on SRHR in Sub-Saharan Africa, which includes at its core a health component, and which is contributing to the realization of UHC. Therefore, a TEI that takes an inclusive, human rights-based and multi-sectoral approach to HSS would complement this first initiative.