



NGO Statement

May 2020

European Green Deal must strengthen partner countries' recovery from the COVID-19 crisis

This joint statement on the COVID-19 crisis accompanies a set of recommendations from NGOs in February 2020 on *Making the European Green Deal work for International Partnerships*¹.

As NGOs working on climate, environment, social justice and sustainable development issues, we stand in solidarity with local communities, vulnerable groups and those on the frontlines of the pandemic in partner countries.

Solidarity, transparency, inclusiveness, and equity must guide the EU's response at all stages.

In the short term, the priority with partner countries must be to address the health crisis, immediate humanitarian and socio-economic impacts on livelihoods, and the right to food. The EU should free up maximal emergency and concessional finance that doesn't exacerbate existing debt vulnerabilities, in the form of budget support and direct transfers to national response plans, support measures to tackle liquidity pressures, and debt relief.

In the medium to long term, an economic crisis in the Global South could push hundreds of millions more into poverty. The EU should ensure support to recovery in partner countries integrates **climate and biodiversity objectives** with the **Sustainable Development Goals**, tackles social inequalities, strengthens access to natural resources, and supports public services. We call on the EU to adopt the following principles to support green, equitable and resilient recovery plans in partner countries:

Alignment with the European Green Deal, the Paris Agreement, biodiversity objectives, and efforts to achieve wider environmental protection

The systemic weaknesses exposed by the virus are aggravated by climate and environmental problems such as pollution, ecosystem conversion (particularly deforestation), illegal wildlife trafficking and unsustainable land and natural resource use. Such activities increase the risk and frequency of global crises, including future pandemics. Recovery packages must therefore scale-up adaptation, Disaster Risk Reduction, and risk preparedness, while tackling the drivers of nature loss and climate change, and support countries to enhance their Nationally Determined Contributions to the Paris Climate Agreement. They should strengthen synergies between efforts to improve health outcomes and those to strengthen food security, nature protection, rights-based restoration, and climate mitigation and adaptation (for example agroecology, forest community projects, sustainable and inclusive natural resource management, safeguarding and restoring wetlands, decentralised renewable energy access). Recovery packages must not support polluters or environmentally harmful activities such as fossil fuel production, overfishing and unsustainable animal farming, industrial agribusiness, or commodity production and imports which cause deforestation,

biodiversity loss, or land and water grabs. To maintain the 'do no harm' principle, the EU should conduct environmental and climate screening (encompassing mitigation and adaptation) and a rights-based assessment for recovery packages.

Provide sustainable financial solutions

Alongside ambitious domestic recovery plans, international solidarity and support must be part of the response to the global crisis. The EU and Member States should achieve and aim to exceed their 0.7% Overseas Development Aid (ODA)/Gross National Income (GNI) commitments. They should also provide long-term biodiversity finance, and new and additional climate finance for mitigation, adaptation, and loss and damage, achieving a balance between mitigation and adaptation finance. Highly-indebted and least developed countries should receive grant-based support. All recovery loans from the European Investment Bank should be concessional, and there must be strong accountability and human rights due diligence around its operations. Blended finance should be used cautiously and primarily to support Micro, Small and Medium Enterprises (MSMEs) and other local and small-scale actors who will be crucial in rebuilding and sustaining economic recovery. The strongest social, environmental, climate and human rights standards and policies should apply to all financial support.

¹ <http://www.caneurope.org/docman/climate-finance-development/3584-making-the-egd-work-for-international-partnerships/file>



Support gender equality

Gender inequalities, age, socioeconomic background, race, ability and other inequalities make people more vulnerable to health and climate crises. Women are at the forefront of the fight against the pandemic because they make up the majority of health workers worldwide, and because of the care role they play in families. The EU should use a gender-responsive approach, make further efforts to address underlying inequalities, and to support and empower women and marginalised groups to fight climate change and protect the environment. This is crucial to building long term resilience to shocks and crises.

Defend civic space and empower civil society

As far as possible, lockdown measures should not reduce participation of and consultation with civil society. There are many innovative digital ways to encourage diverse civil society input, with special efforts needed for hard-to-reach groups. This is essential for the pre-programming and the programming of EU development cooperation and aid for the 2021-2027 period. In the longer term, emergency restrictions may have a profound impact on civic space, so recovery packages should safeguard funding and support for civil society, to enable them to strengthen human rights, democracy, the rule of law, the fight against corruption and environmental protection.

Uphold and strengthen human rights

Legislative responses and use of emergency powers in response to COVID-19 can happen quickly, with potential long-term consequences. In the immediate emergency response and longer-term recovery there must be full respect for the rule of law, democracy and human rights, with special attention to vulnerable communities' rights to land and natural resources. Recovery packages must follow the 'do no harm' principle and not undermine human rights of individuals, Indigenous Peoples or communities. They should support environmental and human rights defenders.

Ensure transparent governance of supply chains

Efforts to promote responsible management of natural resources, and prevent unsustainably and illegally sourced commodities such as fish, timber and wildlife must be maintained and strengthened. To support this the EU should recommit to funding for the EU Wildlife Trafficking Action Plan. In particular the EU should strengthen efforts to combat illegal logging through the Voluntary Partnership Agreements as part of the EU Forest Law Enforcement Governance and Trade (FLEGT) Action Plan. They must also adopt new measures to ensure EU consumption doesn't lead to deforestation, forest degradation, ecosystem conversion or human rights abuses. This would strengthen the livelihoods of resource dependent communities. All stakeholders and civil society groups should be supported to monitor progress, improve transparency, report illegalities and play their watchdog role effectively.

List of undersigning organisations

- ACT Alliance EU
- ActionAid International
- Climate Action Network (CAN) Europe
- Care International
- CIDSE
- Conservation International Europe
- Environmental Investigation Agency (EIA)
- Eurodad
- Fern
- IFAW
- Oxfam
- The Centre for International Development and Training (CIDT)
- Transparency International
- Wetlands International
- World Vision EU Representation
- WWF European Policy Office

This publication has been produced with the assistance of the European Union and the UK Department for International Development. The contents of this publication are the sole responsibility of the author and can in no way be taken to reflect the views of the European Union or the UK Government.

