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Mr Oliver Consolo
Director
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Dear Mr Consolo

Thank you for your letter of 21 December 2010 expressing CONCORD's position on the EUs institutional reforms. Upon my request Mrs Jivka Petkova from my Cabinet met with you and your colleagues on 11 April to discuss all the issues you raised in your correspondence. It is very important to keep in regular contact with NGOs to exchange views. I apologise for the delay in my response to your letter, but I trust that the meeting with Mrs Petkova proved constructive and timely with the European External Action Service now up and running.

I would like to reiterate what I have said before, that development remains at the heart of EU external action, both in working with developing countries themselves but also working together with strategic partners on global challenges. Eradicating poverty, with a special focus on the Millenium Development Goals, is an overarching objective according to the Lisbon Treaty. A key mandate of the EEAS is to guide development policy in a way that is coherent and consistent with the European Union's main principles, values and objectives. The EEAS is committed to ensure better synergies between EU development policies and other key EU priorities such as good governance, human rights, conflict prevention, gender issues, migration, and peace-building. These are mutually enforcing.

I personally take a strong interest in development policy and take the objectives expressed in the Lisbon Treaty very seriously. In that context I regularly chair meetings of EU Development ministers in order to ensure that their input and ideas are an important part of overall reflections. In the EEAS, development is a key concern for relevant geographical units, and in order to further strengthen its importance new "Development Cooperation Coordination" Division has been created under the Managing Directorate "Global and Multilateral issues", where the new Managing Director Mrs Mara Marinaki has just recently been appointed.

The EEAS is also dedicated to close cooperation with the Commission (DG DEVCO). Andris Piebalgs and I work together closely and present programming decisions jointly to the Commission. I believe that the arrangements found regarding development policy and the external financing instruments are the right ones to ensure both coherence and a strong development focus. We will focus together on making EU assistance as effective, flexible, predictable and outcome-oriented as possible.

I also believe that the EU and therefore the EEAS should be active in shaping the global development agenda via the multilateral system and international institutions. We are strongly engaged in the UN, both as a participant in meetings and also as a donor. The EEAS will also be

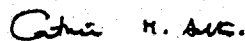
pro-active and contribute to shape the international development agenda in the next few years within other international fora.

We are engaged in cooperation and outreach to developing countries with development at the core of our discussions. The EEAS is actively involved in promoting Strategic Partnerships with the most dynamic emerging economies in Asia and Latin America (China, India, Brazil, Mexico etc). Also the European Investment Bank (EIB) is considering how to expand its cooperation with these countries. More synergies between the EU grants and EIB loans could be achieved there. The EEAS is also stepping up cooperation with the group of low-income countries, especially those in sub-Saharan Africa, in view of the forthcoming UN Conference on low-income developing countries scheduled in 2011.

You rightly stress democracy, rule of law and human rights as key for EU external action policies. Democratization and Human Rights issues as well as an active involvement of the local civil society are key priorities for the EEAS in dealing with partner countries. These are essential policy pre-conditions for long-term growth and sustainable development. For instance, the EEAS is actively supporting the political and socio-economic transformation process in the countries in the Mediterranean region on the way towards democratization and reform, as outlined in the recent communication presented to the European Council by myself and Commission colleagues.

I would like to thank you once again for the energy that you and your member organisations bring to your daily work. I hope that we can find the time to meet again as we did last year, and in the meantime I hope that you are taking advantage of the opportunity to meet with my services.

Yours sincerely

 C. Ashton

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