

January , 2021

Mr. Josep Borrell
High Representative/Vice-President

Mrs. Stella Kyriakides
Commissioner for Health and Food Safety

Mr. Olivér Várhelyi
Commissioner for Neighbourhood and Enlargement

Dear Josep, Stella, and Olivér,

At the recent European Council the EU leaders have discussed and agreed to further co-lead the international response to the pandemic globally and to help other non-EU countries by providing affordable and fair access to the COVID-19 vaccine for all.

We strongly support the efforts and initiatives by Member States and the European Commission to share the vaccines from the allocated contracts with the closest EU neighbours, such as the Western Balkan countries.

At the same time we believe that the EU has to go beyond the current initiatives and give similar attention and support to the other EU neighbors – the countries of EU Eastern Partnership (EaP) – if they wish so. We believe that our borders will not be safe if we do not extend our support to our immediate neighbours. Our Eastern Partners have on numerous occasions expressed their appreciation for the EU's COVID-related assistance and pleaded for facilitated access to the vaccine.

The joint "Team Europe" initiative looks as the most efficient and promising mechanism in this respect. Consultations currently under way at the subgroup on vaccine donation resulted in promising steps with regard to our Western Balkan partners, including support from the available EU instruments.

We call on the Commission to quickly develop a similar support mechanism that the Commission has already launched with regard to the Western Balkans countries. In the context of the upcoming EaP Summit (foreseen for the 1st half of 2021) we need to send a strong and coordinated message on the strategic value of the EaP. Facilitated vaccine-

sharing/support access for our Eastern Partners would be one important element of such a message.

We are confident that our efforts will be appreciated by the Governments and civil society of the EU Eastern Partners and will increase the visibility of the geopolitical efforts of the Commission and of the whole EU.

Being aware of the pandemic situation in the southern neighbourhood, we should also be ready to support this group of countries, if they express their interest.

Sincerely,

Mrs. Ekaterina Zaharieva
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Bulgaria

Mr. Gordan Grlić-Radman
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs
of Croatia

Mr. Tomáš Petříček
Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Czech
Republic

Mr. Jeppe Kofod
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Denmark

Mr. Urmas Reinsalu
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Estonia

Mr. Pekka Haavisto
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Finland

Péter Sijjártó
Minister of Foreign Affairs and Trade

Mr. Edgars Rinkēvičs
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Latvia

Mr. Gabrielius Landsbergis
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Lithuania

Mr. Zbigniew Rau
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Poland

Mr. Bogdan Aurescu
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Romania

Mr. Ivan Korčok
Minister of Foreign and European Affairs
of Slovakia

Mrs. Ann Linde
Minister for Foreign Affairs of Sweden