



THE PRIME MINISTER

6th May 2021

Her Excellency
Ursula von der Leyen
President of the European Commission

Dear President,

A year ago, the COVID-19 pandemic stopped the world and forced all governments to adopt restrictions in order to flatten the curve. This past year has shown the paramount importance of a common response to beat COVID-19. The biggest challenge that humanity has faced over the last few decades cannot be overcome with individualistic solutions. Cooperation must constitute a cornerstone in our response to this health crisis.

The European Union must be at the forefront of the international efforts to beat COVID-19. In the conclusions of the 15-16 October European Council, we encouraged further cooperation at global level. In the December European Council, we highlighted that vaccination should be treated as a global public good and stressed that the EU will continue its efforts to contribute to the international response to the pandemic. In the statement following the videoconference of the members of the European Council in February, we reaffirmed our solidarity with third countries, underlined our determination to step up our global response to the pandemic. And finally, in our last statement in March, we stressed that the work on setting up a vaccine sharing mechanism must be taken forward rapidly, so as to complement and support COVAX's leading role ensuring universal access to, and deployment of, vaccines.

Building on these commitments and in addition to our critical contribution to setting up ACT-A and COVAX, it is now urgent to approve this European vaccine sharing mechanism, coupled with a commitment to share doses. As we are coming closer to the Global Health Summit, Europe needs to show again its critical leadership in building a collective response to the pandemic. We understand that we are asking for this step ahead at a time when Europe is working to speed up its own vaccination process in the coming weeks. However, we cannot neglect our responsibility. We need to be ready to contribute to the international efforts to fight against this global health crisis as soon as circumstances allow it. If the EU does not step up, others will fill the vacuum and use vaccines as a geopolitical tool. This is not in our interest. Vaccines have become security policy and the EU cannot afford to lag behind. To this aim, an increased European production capacity will be a key priority.

As the largest vaccine exporter in the world, the European Union should seize global momentum with our transatlantic partners and provide the leadership to bring together public and private partners to boost global production and distribution of safe, effective and affordable vaccines, ensuring that vaccine know-how and technology is shared proactively. Our commitment to global access has been part of our procurement strategy from the start; now we need to go further with the private sector.

This is not only a moral and political question, but also an epidemiological one. No one will be safe until we all are. If vaccination only takes place in developed countries, our victory over COVID-19 will only be short-lived. We are seeing how quickly the virus is mutating, creating new variants that entail new challenges. We need to make sure that vaccination starts all over the world to be able to beat COVID-19 swiftly and effectively. The EU must live up to its responsibilities as a global power. It is in our own best interest.

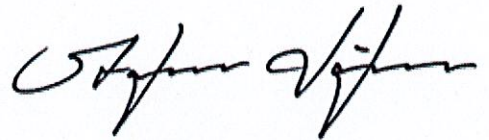
Yours sincerely,



Alexander De Croo
Prime Minister of Belgium



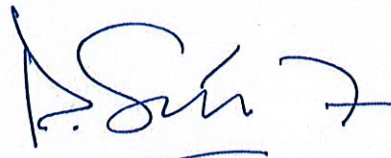
Mette Frederiksen,
Prime Minister of Denmark



Steffan Löfven
Prime Minister of Sweden



Emmanuel Macron
President of France



Pedro Sánchez
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Spain