Dear [Name],

Thank you for your letter of 10 November 2020 in which you refer to the issue of vaccine sharing.

The response to the direct and secondary effects of the COVID-19 pandemic requires a strong collective effort, and we appreciate the contribution of Médecins Sans Frontières, addressing health needs of populations in fragile settings.

Since the COVID-19 outbreak, the EU has been providing support through our “Team Europe” approach. The humanitarian part of this response totals EUR 449 million so far and covers several different sectors. Material support has been an important component of the response, in the form of medical supplies, medical staff and funding relief.

As you are aware, the EU has facilitated, through the EU Humanitarian Air Bridge operations, the deployment of medical supplies and humanitarian health workers, including in cooperation with MSF, to some 20 countries on four continents. This joint effort by the EU, its Member States and its partners has demonstrated the added value of EU action to facilitate the delivery of relief items for the COVID-19 response and other humanitarian needs, and to maintain the movement of medical and humanitarian staff and cargo, in Africa and beyond.

Médecins Sans Frontières

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We would like to reassure you that our humanitarian response to the health crisis resulting from COVID-19 continues. This year there is an additional challenge ahead of us – the process of vaccination. The EU will continue to express solidarity in the spirit of unity and joint action on vaccine sharing.

In the coming months, our support and solidarity will be essential to the collective endeavour of equitable access to vaccines anywhere in the world, including to vulnerable persons living in hard-to-reach areas or in settings currently affected by humanitarian crises. We are committed to this important task.

The EU fully supports the COVAX facility. As Team Europe, the Commission and Member States, we have already contributed to this initiative with more than EUR 850 million and we welcome the fact that 5% of these doses would be foreseen for the Humanitarian Buffer. It is key that these doses are used for humanitarian purposes only, given the scarcity of vaccines in the short term and the importance of supporting all vulnerable people at risk of being excluded from regular vaccination campaigns.

On 19 January, in the Communication for a “United front to beat COVID-19”, we committed to set up an EU vaccine sharing mechanism to ensure that vaccines reach the Western Balkans, Europe’s Eastern and Southern neighbourhood and Africa as soon as possible. This will benefit priority groups, such as health workers as well as humanitarian needs.

While COVAX is the preferred mechanism to ensure vaccine equity, when delivery is not possible under the COVAX facility, vaccine sharing with partner countries could be made possible to ensure early availability.

Finally, to complement the COVAX facility, the EU via the Union Civil Protection Mechanism (UCPM) and its 24/7 Emergency Response Coordination Centre (ERCC), will seek to facilitate the matching of offers of vaccines with requests for assistance, as well as with complementary transport services for vaccine donations, ancillary materials and equipment needed for vaccination campaigns. Additionally, the ERCC could facilitate the mobilisation of health experts from EU Member States and UCPM Participating States for deployments to third countries in need.

Let me take this opportunity to thank you for your continued commitment to the COVID-19 response and for your humanitarian actions around the world.

Yours sincerely,

Janez Lenarčič

Stella Kyriakides