

Brussels, 3 June 2009

Dear Members of the EDF Committee,

You will soon be adopting Guidelines drafted by the European Commission (EC) on the Mid Term Review of the 10th European Development Fund, which will start mid June 2009. We were pleased to be informed by the Commission that it will conduct country specific “assessments” in the partner countries, focusing on governance, economic situation, poverty and social situation and performance in implementing EC cooperation.

The assessment on the poverty and social situation will analyse whether sound social policies are in place at the country level which contribute to poverty reduction and the achievement of the MDGs. **We urge the EDF Committee to ensure that health takes a central place in this assessment in each partner country. In addition, the Guidelines should include clear criteria on how to carry out these assessments, considering the limited capacity of EC Delegations on health issues in many countries. The involvement of the Ministry of Health in the assessment and review process overall should be actively supported by EC Delegations and EU Member States.** Three of the eight MDGs relate directly to health. Yet, in sub-Saharan Africa, the project shortfalls for their achievement are most severe, as reported in the United Nations 2007 mid term review of progress towards the MDGs. Furthermore, ACP Ministers of Health have also expressed grave concerns about other health issues outside the MDGs and the huge challenges faced by health services in addressing them. Despite this health crisis in Sub-Saharan Africa, EC funding to the health sector has not increased since 2000 as a proportion of its total development assistance and health is rarely included as a focal sector in the 10th EDF country strategy papers.

The limited involvement of civil society in the development and reviews of the 10th EDF country strategy papers so far is another key concern we would like to raise with the EDF Committee. As the recent report of the European Court of Auditors on the involvement of non state actors (NSAs) in EC Development Cooperation concludes, “the limited involvement of NSAs, and widespread weaknesses in the timing and the way the consultations were organized, show that translating the ambitious goal of involving NSAs in all EC development cooperation into reality remains a major challenge.” According to the information that we received from the EC, the consultation process of the Mid Term Review of the 10th EDF is supposed to start 15 June, only three days after the adoption of the guidelines! As the in-country consultation will have to be finished by mid-October 2009, this will give a very short period of time for EC Delegations to organize meaningful consultations with all relevant stakeholders. For this reason, it is even more important that EC Delegations are requested **to establish clear and predictable schedules of consultation for the Mid Term Review of the 10th EDF. The Guidelines should also specify the importance of providing NSAs with the necessary documentation well in advance of the consultation, so as to ensure sufficient time for proper preparation.**

We very much hope you will take these issues into account when you are discussing and adopting the 10th EDF Mid Term Review Guidelines.

Yours sincerely,

Action for Global Health Brussels, Marie Stopes International, Stop AIDS Alliance, International Planned Parenthood Federation – European Network, German Foundation for World Population (DSW).