

*Draft Speech, Ambassador Acconcia at the occasion of the Signing Ceremony of the EU Emergency EU budget support in response to COVID-19 crisis in Ghana and NorPrevSec*

Honourable Minister,

excellences Ambassadors and colleagues of the EU missions in Ghana,

Colleagues of the Ministry of finance

Members of the press, ladies and gentlemen

Last February a tiny virus brought the world to its knees. The COVID-19 pandemic exposed our fragility at so many levels. But it also showed us our capacity to respond, to adapt. And it showed us the importance of solidarity, within each nation, and among nations. We have understood that faced with a global threat such as the coronavirus we can only react if we stick together with a global, coordinated response.

This was not obvious from the start. Back in February, when the virus hit Europe with sudden violence, it took us by surprise and left us stunned for a long moment, during which it seemed that it would shake the fundamentals of our union.

But Europe rose to challenge and, while mobilising all our resources to fight the virus at home, we also started to work on a strong reaction to support our partners in distress.

It was not easy because we are at the end of the EU's seven-year budget cycle and this meant that we had to reorient existing resources. However, pooling resources from the EU, the EU Member States and financial institutions we put together a 20 billion euro package to support our partner countries to combat the coronavirus pandemic and its consequences. We called it Team Europe initiative

and since then it has mobilised around 36 billion euro all around the world, with a focus on Africa and the most vulnerable countries and communities.

This is how the *Emergency EU budget support in response to the COVID-19 crisis in Ghana* came into being. Assembled to mitigate the devastating effects of the COVID-19 crisis in Ghana, this budget support contract between the Government of Ghana and the EU consists of a total amount of EUR 87 MEUR – nearly 600 million cedis – to help Ghana face the multiple impacts of the crisis and support a robust recovery that, I see from the recent statistics, has already started.

And at this point, Honourable Minister, let me here commend your government and Ghanaians for their exemplary response on so many fronts, in such challenging times. I am confident that Ghana will rise from this crisis stronger and proud that the EU is here to contribute.

Honourable minister, in spite of the difficulties and suffering of the past months, today is a happy day. Our teams have worked hard to make this happen, with more than one moment of frustration because we would have liked this to come faster. But at last we made it.

In a few days, the EU will transfer the bulk of this as direct untargeted budget support to the national treasury of Ghana.

At this occasion, I am also pleased to have an opportunity to sign another financing agreement: *Preventing Electoral Violence and Providing Security to the Northern Border Regions of Ghana*, NorPrevSec in short. While we refocussed most of our activities towards the fight against COVID-19, we retained NorPrevSec as it touches upon another issue of vital importance to Ghanaians: human security in the context of potential electoral and communal violence. The 5,9 MEUR / 39,6 million cedi programme will tackle the threat of the rise of violent extremism, terrorism and organised crime in the

most vulnerable districts of Northern Ghana. In the “Team Europe” spirit, it will be partly implemented by FIAPP, a Spanish development agency.

Honourable Minister,

Let me conclude: The COVID-19 pandemic has caused a terrible crisis but has also been a time for reflection, for renewal.

It is my sincerest hope that we can remember 2020 as a turning point – the year we collectively decided to build back better, greener and become more prepared when, hope later rather than sooner, the next one will come.

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Pour mémoire:

U.VDL State of the Union Speech 2020 extract:

“This is our opportunity to make change happen by design –not by disaster or by diktat from others in the world. To emerge stronger by creating opportunities for the world of tomorrow and not just building contingencies for the world of yesterday”