

DEAR PRESIDENT VON DER LEYEN,

We women leaders, in all diversity, thank you for your leadership in advancing gender equality and the empowerment of girls and women across the world.

Girls and women suffered disproportionate setbacks during the COVID-19 pandemic, and this pattern will continue as future humanitarian, climate, debt, and health crises converge. In the fight against HIV/AIDS, in particular, it is no different. In many parts of the world, adolescent girls and young women are at a much greater risk of acquiring HIV than boys and men of the same age. Gender inequality, discrimination, violence, and limited access to education heightens the risk of new infection, as well as untimely pregnancy.

This must change. We need renewed commitment to empowering girls and women, everywhere. For the three young women that become infected with HIV every four minutes. For the 50 adolescent girls that die daily from AIDS-related illnesses. For the caregivers of people living with HIV/AIDS in Africa, two-thirds of whom are female.

In the coming weeks, our dedication to these girls and women will be put to the test. The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria is seeking at least US\$ 18 billion to continue its life-saving work over the next three years, which will enable it to implement its new Strategy, the most ambitious to date when it comes to advancing gender equality. This will reduce HIV incidence among adolescent girls and young women in most affected countries by 72% by 2026. We are therefore calling on you to increase your contribution to the Global Fund by at least 30%.

Ending these diseases is just one face of the struggle for gender equality. We must also leverage the transformational power of education and step up action to protect sexual and reproductive health rights for all. For millions of girls and women, these decisions will determine whether they are able to reach their full potential.

We are committed to doing our part, and we are calling on you to step up to the challenge. You have the power and resources to help get us back on track and transform the futures of girls and women around the world. Let's finish the fight together.

Yours sincerely,

1. **Nane Annan,**
Kofi Annan Foundation Board Member
2. **Joyce Banda,**
former President of the Republic of Malawi
3. **Winnie Byanyima,**
UNAIDS Executive Director
4. **Yvonne Chaka Chaka,**
South African singer and global health advocate
5. **Helen Clark,**
former Prime Minister of New Zealand
6. **Awa Marie Coll-Seck,**
Présidente du Comité National de l'Initiative pour la
Transparence dans les Industries Extractives, Senegal
7. **Bineta Diop,**
African Union Special Envoy for Women, Peace and
Security
8. **Benita Ferrero-Waldner,**
former European Union Commissioner for External
Relations and European Neighborhood Policy; former
Federal Minister for Foreign Affairs, Austria
9. **Graça Machel,**
Founder of Graça Machel Trust and Foundation for
Community Development Member of the Africa
Progress Panel (APP)
10. **Sbongile Nkosi,**
Co-Executive Director of the Global Network of People
Living with HIV (GNP+)
11. **Magda Robalo,**
former Minister of Health, Guinea-Bissau; Global
Managing Director at Women in Global Health
12. **Minata Samaté Cessouma,**
AU Commissioner for Health, Humanitarian Affairs
and Social Development
13. **Gayle Smith,**
CEO of The ONE Campaign
14. **Aminata Touré,**
former Prime Minister of the Republic of Senegal
15. **Mabel van Oranje,**
serial entrepreneur for social change; AIDS activist
16. **Heidemarie Wieczorek-Zeul,**
former Federal Minister for Economic Cooperation and
Development, Germany