

***The COVAX Mechanism and Zarifa Ghafari,  
awarded the 2021 North-South Prize of the Council of Europe.***

**JURY'S DECISION**

At its meeting on November 19th, the Executive Committee of the European Centre for Global Interdependence and Solidarity / North South Centre of the Council of Europe approved the decision of its Bureau, as Jury of the North South Prize, to award the North South Prize 2021 to the COVAX Mechanism and to Zarifa Ghafari.

The COVAX mechanism, created in June 2020, is the vaccine pillar of the “Access to COVID-19 Tools ACT-Accelerator”. The Mechanism is co-led by the World Health Organisation (WHO), the GAVI Alliance (Global Alliance for Vaccination and Immunisation) and the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations (CEPI). Additionally, COVAX collaborates with the UNICEF as a vaccine distribution partner, as well as with the World Bank Group. COVAX's aim is to promote the speedy development and manufacture of COVID-19 vaccines to distribute them worldwide, safeguarding the human right to health for all people through multilateral co-operation at a global scale. It is the single global initiative that brings together governments and industry with the shared concern of ensuring that COVID-19 vaccines are available also to low-income countries. So far, over 10.000 million dollars have been raised through this mechanism, and predictions point at a total of 1.425.000 million doses being collected until the end of 2021, 1.2 million of which shall be distributed in low-income countries.

The Jury decided to award the Prize to the COVAX initiative as it represents the values of international solidarity and equity that the North-South Prize of the Council of Europe stands for. COVAX has an inextricable link with the promotion and protection of human rights, and it calls for the mobilisation of collective action, upon the premise that we are all part of the same humanity. The Jury considered that, amidst the challenge of the COVID-19 pandemic, COVAX has been a source of hope that reveals that, with consciousness of our interdependence, we can all together provide a solidary response to global challenges.

Zarifa Ghafari is one of Afghanistan's first female mayors. In November 2019, she became the mayor of Maidan Shahr, capital city of the Wardak Province, Afghanistan. Zarifa was the youngest to be appointed at the age of 26. In her mandate, she placed high in the agenda the defence of women rights and their encouragement to participate in politics. She is currently seeking asylum as a political refugee in Germany.

The Jury decided to award the Prize to Zarifa Ghafari for her efforts in the fight for women's rights in her country and internationally. She is a symbol of commitment and of women's empowerment who advocates for a greater participation of women in politics. Through her, the Prize recognizes the efforts of Afghan women to advance their rights and expresses its solidarity with them. The Jury also wanted to express its solidarity with women all over the world and acknowledge all of those who dedicate their efforts to improve their situation.

By awarding these two Prizes the Jury intended to express its recognition to two causes which deserve our solidarity especially in the present moment: the struggle for life in front of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the fight for gender equality.