
MEDIA STATEMENT

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ECCP recommends ways to facilitate PH operations of healthcare companies under ‘new normal’

The European Chamber of Commerce of the Philippines (ECCP) recognizes that certain global and domestic quarantine measures that have been put in place have affected business operations and the availability of essential healthcare products that are vital in the fight against COVID-19. Nonetheless, we acknowledge the efforts that have been put in place to address the bottlenecks and mitigate the impacts of the pandemic to businesses and the Filipino people.

To help healthcare companies cope with the repercussions brought about by the pandemic, we urge the Philippine government to explore sustainable approaches to improving access to medicines and medical equipment.

First of all, to support the development of treatment for COVID-19 in the Philippines, the ECCP proposes that pharmaceutical and medical devices companies are provided with real data and forecasts on the product demand that needs to be met in the coming months.

Additionally, we recommend the establishment of guidelines on the entry, use, and dispensing of medicines and medical equipment. In connection with this, we prescribe the implementation of a set of procurement guidelines that adapts to the ongoing health crisis, allowing for the expedited channel in purchasing and acquiring diagnostics and medicines used to treat COVID-19.

The ECCP also underscores the increasingly important role that research-based pharmaceutical and medical device companies play to help address the COVID-19 pandemic. With this, we call for the implementation of mechanisms that help drive the growth of the healthcare industry in the Philippines, among which policies that support and incentivize innovation, as well as encourage public-private partnership.

Finally, the ECCP highly recommends that the implementation of Executive Order No. 104 entitled “Improving Access to Healthcare through the Regulation of Prices in the Retail of Drugs and Medicines” be rescinded.

Alternatively, we encourage the Philippine government to consider (1) increasing the health budget and medicines subsidies; (2) expanding pooled procurement and multi-year contracts to increase volume of healthcare products; and (3) institutionalizing price negotiation based on sound review of medicine prices and economic viability of reduced prices of pharmaceutical products. Likewise, a temporary price freeze on medicines listed under EO No. 104 can be implemented, under a declaration of a public health emergency.

These measures will help create a business environment that is conducive to research, development, and innovation, resulting in the improved capacity of the Philippine healthcare system. Ultimately, the effective implementation of such policies will help build the country's resilience to the current and emerging public health threats.

The ECCP and its members remains committed to support the Philippine government in its efforts to mitigate the spread of COVID-19, while taking in due consideration the wider and long-term impact that this health crisis may pose to the country's economy and the Filipino people.