

24 May 2012

Ms. Veronika Skvortsova

Chair, High-level Meeting on Health & the Economy
Minister of Health
Russian Federation

Dear Minister Skvortsova:

The APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC) is the formal private sector advisory group of the Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (“APEC”) Forum. Representing the business communities of all 21 APEC member economies, ABAC is tasked with supporting the success of APEC by providing private sector insights on how best to achieve APEC’s goals, both through APEC’s own initiatives, and in dialogue with other international organizations.

ABAC applauds Russia’s decision to hold a High-level Meeting on Health and the Economy in St. Petersburg on 27 June 2012. In its annual Report to APEC Leaders in 2011, ABAC commended the foresight of the APEC Health Working Group and the Life Sciences Innovation Forum in holding the first high-level and multi-sectoral Health Systems Innovation Dialogue to discuss ways of establishing multi-sectoral partnerships to address non-communicable disease challenges in the region. The second annual APEC High-Level Health Meeting in Russia is an important step towards ensuring that this important issue remains high on the APEC agenda.

Healthy populations clearly improve quality of life but they are also a critical element of economic growth and development. The growth achieved by APEC economies in recent years is threatened by the increase in non-communicable diseases (NCDs) that has resulted from aging and lifestyle changes across the populations of APEC economies. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that each 10% rise in NCDs is associated with a .5% decrease in GDP. In contrast, improvements in health are clearly associated with increased economic productivity. For example, WHO studies suggest that a one-year increase in average life expectancy is linked to a 4.3% increase in GDP. The public and private sectors have an interest in maintaining healthy, productive workforces and robust healthcare systems that will be vital to driving the sustained economic growth in APEC economies.

Collaboration between the public and private sectors in promoting health, including through public-private partnerships, is essential to responding to the growing threat of NCDs to sustainable economic growth in APEC. The public sector plays a crucial role in strengthening the overall health system in a way that promotes prevention and early detection of NCDs among high-risk populations. Many private sector companies have found that investing in the health and well-being of their employees can help combat NCDs and generate a measurable and significant return on investment in terms of higher productivity, lower absenteeism and lower disability. Together, public and private sector efforts to promote better health can help reduce the economic burden of disease and transform health into a valuable economic asset. ABAC

urges APEC economies to promote best practice sharing and capacity building on ways to promote healthy communities and workforces.

In addition, the potential for the private sector to contribute to the development of healthy, productive populations can be enhanced by government steps to encourage innovation, reduce regulatory burdens, and emphasize transparency and compliance while reducing corruption. For example, the public sector plays an important role in creating a regulatory environment that supports innovation in the life sciences while the private sector contributes by conducting research and development of innovative new products and services. ABAC encourages you and your colleagues to maintain a dialogue with ABAC and other private sector stakeholders to ensure the potential of the private sector is leveraged to the fullest extent.

ABAC looks forward to supporting outcomes from the High-Level Dialogue that highlights further opportunities for business and government to collaborate and address the health challenges in the region.

Thank you for your leadership on the health care discussion this year. We wish you a productive set of meetings.

Sincerely,



Ziyavudin Magomedov
ABAC Chair 2012