



13 August 2015

Hon. Janette P. Loreto-Garin

Chair, High Level Meeting on Health & the Economy
Secretary of Health
Republic of the Philippines

Dear Secretary Garin:

The APEC Business Advisory Council applauds your department's great efforts on promoting the health agenda in APEC this year, including hosting the 5th APEC High Level Meeting on Health and the Economy (HLM5). The issue of health is directly connected to economic development and this year's theme of "Building Inclusive Economies." As representatives of the business communities throughout APEC, ABAC members are keenly aware of the mounting economic challenges and workforce impact resulting from the continued burden of infectious disease, rapidly aging populations, and exponentially increasing rates of non-communicable disease.

The HLM provides an important opportunity for collaboration among the healthcare stakeholders within the APEC region to discuss policies that promote an environment that fosters the growth of life sciences innovation and the improvement of public health in the Asia-Pacific region. We recognize the important contributions of the Life Sciences Innovation Forum (LSIF) and the Health Working Group in organizing the meeting and we encourage future APEC hosts to continue this vital dialogue.

Last year's ABAC and the LSIF's jointly-published study, *Impact of Health on Worker Attendance and Productivity in the APEC Region* concluded that economies risk a loss of GDP growth of as much as 6.1% by 2030 due to the impact of growing chronic disease and aging on workforce productivity. The enormous impact of non-communicable diseases on worker productivity and lost economic growth require innovative partnerships between governments and the private sector to address the challenges of chronic disease.

Building on the interest last year's report generated, ABAC is continuing its partnership with the LSIF to pursue additional research and examine the intersection between pensions and early retirement caused by ill health. We believe this new study will further demonstrate the importance of workforce health as a competitiveness issue.

ABAC encourages APEC governments to adopt policies that facilitate innovation and increased flows of trade and investment, such as measures to promote regulatory convergence. ABAC is actively collaborating with the LSIF on a pilot project in relation to global data standards focused on pharmaceutical products. This pilot project is designed to promote patient safety by measuring the benefits and efficiency gains that can be achieved through a common data standard for the serialization and verification of pharmaceutical products. Such standards provide a practical means to address supply chain connectivity, traceability and integrity, thereby improving the operation of regional supply chains and advancing APEC's trade facilitation and medical supply safety goals.

ABAC applauds the *Healthy Women, Healthy Economies* initiative that is being jointly advanced by the Policy Partnership on Women and the Economy (PPWE), the Health Working Group and the Human Resources Development Working Group (HRDWG). We look forward to seeing the recommendations

and acknowledge the need to promote dialogue within ABAC and throughout the region's business community on women's health and workforce participation.

The issue of the health and well-being of the citizens of APEC is indelibly linked to economic growth and empowerment. We congratulate Ministers on their holistic approach to strengthening health systems and look forward to the approval of the Road Map to achieve implementation of the Healthy Asia Pacific 2020 initiative. ABAC is encouraged that health has gained increased prominence on APEC's agenda. Continued industry engagement coupled with robust participation from officials responsible for trade, finance, and healthcare policy, will ensure its continued success and further promote economic cooperation and inclusive growth in the region.

ABAC strongly supports APEC's health agenda and looks forward to continued collaboration with government officials to advance positive health and economic outcomes for the Asia-Pacific.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Doris Ho", with a horizontal line underneath.

Doris Ho
ABAC Chair 2015