

4 August 2024

The Honorable Cesar Vasquez Sanchez

Chair, APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy
Minister of Health
Peru

Dear Minister Vásquez,

On behalf of the APEC Business Advisory Council (ABAC), we are pleased to share our recommendations to Health Ministers ahead of the 14th APEC High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy in Lima, Peru.

APEC's priority should be building strong, equitable, and sustainable health systems with adequate investment in health care supply chains, financing models, and focusing on addressing new and emerging challenges including pandemics, mental health wellbeing, and the rise of non-communicable diseases. Partnering with the private sector on solutions will enable APEC economies to develop resilient health systems capable to meet current and emerging demands.

The 2024 ABAC recommendations to Health Ministers include:

Digital health innovations are transforming healthcare systems and addressing urgent health challenges while reducing costs and promoting health equity, especially among populations that are hard-to-reach and in vulnerable situations. These innovations can be used to alleviate healthcare workforce and education shortage issues, particularly those exacerbated by increasing demographic demands.

- *APEC economies should build digital health literacy and skills training for providers and patients, leveraging best practice experience from the private sector.*

The 2024 ABAC-funded research report *Health Data Sharing* (Annex A) finds that the social and economic benefit of **health data sharing** is worth at least 2.5% or more of global GDP and yet is 97% under-utilized. Health data sharing raises important policy issues including data quality, privacy, inconsistent standards, overly restrictive or non-harmonized regulations, lack of ethical considerations, and insufficient governance and financing for implementation of change. APEC economies should take note of the recommendations in the ABAC Health Data Sharing report.

- *APEC economies should form official health data sharing offices, right-size health data sharing investments in domestic strategies, expand capability upskilling, include private sector expertise, harmonize the governance of opt-out models and ethical/privacy protocols, align on a common technical standard for data formats, identification numbers, and interlinks following an international protocol like HL7, and aim higher for centralized, accessible, and usable repositories.*

Artificial intelligence (AI) can be used to support patient engagement and education, assist in diagnosis and treatment, and advance drug discoveries. It is also a valuable sector, with the global AI healthcare market forecast to be worth \$187 billion by 2030. Healthcare providers' practical knowledge and skills can be amplified through advanced training in AI, adoption of AI platforms

supported by a robust health data sharing ecosystem, and new technologies such as using software as a medical device (SaMD).

- *APEC economies should ensure that regulations enable the responsible and interoperable use of AI in healthcare to build stronger, healthier economies in the region.*
- *The APEC Health Working Group and other relevant fora, in collaboration with the private sector, should focus on harmonization of existing domestic regulatory frameworks on the approval process for software as a medical device (SaMD) to ensure safety, streamline workflows, and improve software and device effectiveness.*

As the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated, **healthcare supply chain resilience** is critical to the economic and overall well-being of the region. To ensure seamless access to healthcare equipment, medicines, biologics, and therapeutics ABAC calls on APEC economies to:

- *Keep trade open and emphasize regulatory harmonization to maximize flexibility and stability in healthcare supply chains.*
- *Consult and collaborate more closely with businesses to ensure well-functioning critical supply chains.*

We thank you for your attention to our key messages. ABAC stands ready to collaborate with you during the SOM 3 Health Working Group activities and the High-Level Meeting on Health and the Economy.

Yours sincerely,



Julia Torreblanca
ABAC Chair 2024