

**Remarks by AmCham Vietnam Executive Director Mary Tarnowka  
Foreign Business Associations' Meeting with HCMC Leadership  
Protecting Health and Safety and Enabling Economic Growth and  
Recovery During COVID-19: Challenges and Solutions  
August 20, 2021**

Kính thưa Bí thư Nguyễn Văn Nên! Thưa Chủ tịch Ủy ban Nhân dân Nguyễn Thành Phong, thưa Phó chủ Tịch ủy ban nhân dân Võ Văn Hoan. kính thưa quý vị

Party Secretary Nen, Chairman Phong, Vice Chairman Hoan, distinguished guests, colleagues, thank you for calling today's meeting and seeking the views of foreign business associations. I am honored to be here today on behalf of AmCham Vietnam, representing our over 550 corporate members and 2000 individual business representatives, billions of dollars in investment, more than 30% of Ho Chi Minh City's exports, thousands of direct and hundreds of thousands of indirect employees, and a significant percentage of tax contributions.

AmCham Vietnam is committed to supporting the Government's COVID-19 dual goals of protecting lives and livelihoods, protecting the health and safety of the people, and enabling economic growth and recovery. We are committed to Vietnam and to HCMC. We are invested in the future of the communities where we live and work.

**1. Vaccines.**

Our top priority is for the Government to ensure transparent, equitable, efficient, and safe distribution of proven, approved vaccines, according to priority risk groups. We are concerned about reports of crowding at vaccination sites, which could cause them to become super spreader events.

We are grateful for the increased supplies of vaccines to HCMC and City leadership's goals to vaccinate 70% of eligible residents by the end of August, as well as the Vietnamese government's commitment to ensure that all residents, Vietnamese and foreign, are included equitably.

We urge the Central government to focus its vaccine distribution to the current outbreak epicenters, particularly HCMC, Binh Duong, Dong Nai,

and surrounding provinces, which also happen to be the locations of much of Vietnam's high-value manufacturing operations.

We encourage HCMC leadership to enable greater partnership with private healthcare providers on vaccine rollout. Many of our healthcare provider members, including FV Hospital, International SOS Clinic, City International Hospital, and Victoria Healthcare, already have volunteered their staff to support HCMC vaccination. We recommend that they also be allowed to administer vaccines at their own facilities and to be able to charge a reasonable administrative fee. We encourage approval of mechanisms to allow private healthcare providers to commercially import vaccines to supplement the Government supplies. We also welcome greater use of telemedicine throughout the country, particularly to support over-burdened outbreak areas in HCMC and nearby provinces. In that regard, we are pleased to see that Varian, a leading U.S. medical device manufacturer, has established remote treatment capabilities for its linear accelerator cancer treatment equipment located at the HCMC Hospital for Oncology, to ensure continuity of care for cancer patients during this difficult time.

## **2. Manufacturing Operations.**

We appreciate the Government's prioritization of workers in industrial parks and the vaccination already of many workers in SHTP, HEPZA, and other industrial parks. More needs to be done to ensure that production and delivery of essential products and services can be maintained, as well as facilitating the reopening of Vietnam's overall manufacturing operations and supply chains – domestic and global.

The "3 on-site" bubble model (3 Stay-in/1 or 1 Route-2 Stops) has been useful as an interim mechanism, but is not sustainable from a health, safety, cost, or practical standpoint.

We urge higher prioritization of unvaccinated workers operating in bubbles since they are at extremely high risk.

We welcome the pilot programs being considered in HCMC and other locations for vaccinated workers to allow flexibility of one road, 2 stops, to include personal residences as one of the stops, supplemented by more frequent company use of rapid antigen tests. As more workers are

vaccinated, we hope these pilot programs can be expanded throughout HCMC and Vietnam to allow companies to send employees back home.

We value the efforts that have been made to ensure vaccination of workers in ports in Cat Lai and Cai Mep, as well as transportation and logistics sectors to ensure continuity of supply chains.

We also welcome the use of a negative banned list rather than a positive list to facilitate transportation in and between provinces. We encourage clarification that feminine hygiene products and diapers are also essential products.

We encourage written confirmation by the government now to liberalize the weekly and annual overtime caps to accommodate the current extraordinary workforce challenges.

We recommend allowing companies to buy test kits and conduct their own COVID-19 rapid testing programs. To do so, an adequate supply of test kits will need to be made available.

We urge improving the efficiency of the Fx chain management to minimize the impact on operations once a COVID-19 confirmed case is detected through quick contact tracing, segregation, a reasonable quarantine period, and release of negative-testing cases.

We value today's event and recommend that HCMC's COVID-19 Task Forces establish a regular mechanism to interface with foreign and domestic business associations, to respond to new developments.

### **3. AmCham Cares**

AmCham Vietnam is invested in the success of Vietnam and HCMC and the surrounding area. We advocated for and welcomed the U.S. donation of 5 million doses of Moderna vaccines to Vietnam, in addition to those it has donated to the COVAX program generally, as well as the \$4.5 million of specialized vaccine freezers committed during the recent visit of Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin. We continue to advocate for additional U.S. donations of vaccines and medical equipment to Vietnam, as well as continued contributions by our members.

Last year, thanks to generous contributions from our members, AmCham donated 250,000 surgical masks, ThermoFisher PCR testing and analysis systems, and a fully-equipped Ford ambulance to HCMC authorities for use in the COVID response. AmCham is currently carrying out an AmCham CARES fundraising campaign to donate ventilators and other critically-needed medical equipment to support to government's COVID response effort. We expect to deliver four Medtronic Covidien ventilators, worth about \$200,000 in early September.

Many of our members have also contributed directly, including Intel's donations of 12 ventilators, 10,000 PPE [to Thu Duc city Health center in Aug 2021], and an ambulance, 2 ventilator systems to HCMC DoH in July 2020- to date, Intel has contributed more than \$400K (~9.2 billion VND) for Covid-19 related donations. Medtronic's donations of 10 oxygen monitors and 5000 COVID test kits valued at \$40,000 in addition to providing ventilators to AmCham CARES at cost; and numerous donations and programs by Pharmacity to support HCMCs COVID Response, including donations of 100,000 medical masks and other necessities for the forefront healthcare workers, donations to the Fatherland Front Fund, and support for distribution of essential food products to city residents, totaling over \$280,000.

We want to particularly note the important work of one of our NGO members, VinaCapital Foundation, which, thanks to donations from VinaCapital as well as many foreign and domestic businesses, by the end of this week, will have donated and deployed 45 ventilators, with another 36 more ventilators and one ECMO in HCMC and surrounding provinces deployed by the end of August, totaling \$1.35 million.

In a recent survey we conducted, the second highest concerns of our members, after "concern about quality of care if you or a family member developed serious symptoms" was "worries about poor and disadvantaged who are impacted more severely". We value the efforts the HCMC leadership is taking to provide food and housing for those in need, without a support system. AmCham will also be doing our part. We will be conducting another fundraising campaign shortly under AmCham Cares to raise funds for a local NGO which delivers food and meals to people in need, and we look forward to partnering with other foreign business associations in these efforts.

#### **4. Enabling Safe Reopening and Economic Recovery**

We welcome an opportunity to partner to develop a roadmap for economic recovery and a safe reopening. As previously noted above, vaccines will be the key tool for an exit strategy and recovery.

Tax relief, both PIT and CIT, as well as reductions in utilities, and availability of low-interest loans, will be critical to help hard-hit sectors and small businesses.

We encourage streamlined procedures to facilitate approval of and travel to Vietnam of foreign experts, including adjusting the requirements to reflect international practices, and eliminating the need for consularized, notarized documents. This will help both maintain existing manufacturing operations and facilitate additional investment.

In this regard, we are delighted to see the new policies to reduce quarantine to 7 days for those fully vaccinated.

I personally benefited from this policy as did AmCham Vietnam's Chairman Chad Ovel, who experienced his third stay in a quarantine hotel this year. We can attest this reduction greatly increases our productivity and ability to contribute to economic growth and recovery in Vietnam.

Thank you for allowing me an opportunity to share recommendations on behalf of AmCham Vietnam.

Thành phố HCM cố lên, Việt Nam cố lên!

Kính chúc quý vị thật nhiều sức khỏe và chúng ta nhanh chóng vượt qua đại dịch