PRESIDENTIAL COMMUNICATIONS OPERATIONS OFFICE
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PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESIDENTIAL SPOKESPERSON HARRY ROQUE
October 14, 2021 (12:06 P.M. – 12: 47 P.M.)

SEC. ROQUE: Magandang hapon, Pilipinas. Napakadami po nating balita ngayong araw na ito. Simulan po natin sa usaping bagyo. Nakikisimpatiya po kami at nakikiramay po sa mga nasawi dahil po sa Bagyong Maring.

Ayon sa ulat ng National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council, as of October 14, 2021, tatlumpu na po ang namatay, tatlo ang injured at labing-apat ang nawawala. Nasa 1,775 displaced families or 7,370 displaced persons ang nasa 124 evacuation centers sa Regions I, II, III, MIMAROPA, VI, Caraga at CAR. Nasa mahigit dalawang milyong piso ang assistance na naibigay sa Region II, Region III, MIMAROPA at CAR, kasama rito ang family food packs na nasa 1.7 million pesos.

Samantala, as of October 13, 2021, ayon sa DA, ang estimated cost of damage sa agrikultura sa Regions I, II, CAR at other regions ay nasa 692 million pesos. Ayon sa DA, as of October 13, 2021, ito po ang ilan sa mga intervention ng pamahalaan para tulungan ang ating mga magsasaka at mangingisda: Quick Response Fund amounting to 172 million para sa rehabilitation ng mga apektadong lugar; ready na for distribution ang 169,998 bags ng rice seeds, 16,601 bags ng corn seeds at 1,480 kilos ng assorted vegetables sa mga apektadong rehiyon; drugs at biologics para sa livestock at poultry; indemnification para sa affected farmers at fishermen mula sa Philippine Crop Insurance Corporation; SURE Calamity Assistance Program na may budget na 650 million para sa 32,500 affected farmers, fishermen sa Regions I, II and CAR – nasa 20,000 po ito bawat recipient household, zero interest at no collateral, ten years to pay.

Sa balitang IATF: Inaprubahan po ng inyong IATF ang revised rules for green list for international arriving passengers effective October 14, 2021. Madami po ang nagtatanong, ang Estados Unidos po ay yellow list, okay. Para sa fully vaccinated foreign nationals, kinakailangan nila ng negative RT-PCR test na isinagawa sa loob ng 72 hours bago sila umalis sa country of origin. Pagdating sa Pilipinas, hindi na nila kinakailangang mag-facility quarantine pero kinakailangan nilang mag-self monitor ng sintomas hanggang sa 14th day. Para naman sa mga Pilipinong fully vaccinated, puwede silang mag-facility-based quarantine hanggang lumabas ang kanilang negative RT-PCR test na kinuha sa quarantine facility upon approval. Or, kung ayaw nilang mag-facility-based quarantine, kinakailangang mag-present ng negative RT-PCR test within 72 hours bago sila umalis sa country of origin, pero kinakailangan nilang mag-self monitor ng sintomas hanggang 14th day.

Sa mga unvaccinated or partially vaccinated or mga taong kung saan hindi ma-verify ang kanilang vaccination status at mga bakunadong hindi makapag-test before travel, kinakailangan nilang mag-facility-based quarantine hanggang sa lumabas ang kanilang negative RT-PCR test na ginawa sa ikalimang araw. Para sa mga foreign nationals ha, kinakailangan nilang mag-book ng hotel reservation na hanggang anim na araw.

Samantala, ang mga unvaccinated or partially vaccinated minor children na bumibiyahe kasama ang kanilang fully vaccinated parent or guardian ay required na sundin ang quarantine protocols na naaayon sa kanilang mga vaccination status. Kinakailangan samahan ng parent o guardian ang bata o menor de edad sa quarantine facility sa kabuuan ng kanilang quarantine period.

Para naman ma-validate ang vaccination status ng mga Overseas Filipino Workers at kanilang mga spouse, parents and children na nagta-travel sa Pilipinas o abroad, at mga non-OFWs na nabakunahan na dito sa Pilipinas at sa ibang bansa, at mga foreigners na nabakunahan sa Pilipinas, maaaring ipakita ang kanilang VaxCert digital certificate, Bureau of Quarantine, World Health Organization issued international certificate of vaccination or prophylaxis, ICV or ang national digital certificate ng foreign government kung saan sila nabakunahan.

Para sa mga foreigners na nabakunahan sa ibang bansa, maaari nilang ipakita ang kanilang WHO-issued ICV or ang national digital certificate ng foreign government na tumatanggap sa VaxCertPH under a reciprocal agreement.

Panghuli, inaprubahan din at in-adopt ng IATF ang mga revisions sa guidelines on the implementation of alert level system for COVID-19 response in the pilot areas.

Inaprubahan din ng inyong IATF ang paglalagay sa Metro Manila sa ilalim ng Alert Level 3 simula October 16 hanggang October 31, 2021.

Ito po iyong sinasabi natin noong nakaraang press briefing na dahil nasa moderate po ang ating healthcare utilization rate at moderate rin ang ating two-week attack rate at daily attack rate ay pupuwede nga pong maibaba sa Level 3 ang alert level sa Metro Manila; at nangyari na nga po.

Puntahan naman natin po ngayon ang guidelines for areas under Alert Level 3 'no: Unang-una po, pinapayagan na ang intrazonal or interzonal travel subject sa reasonable restriction base sa edad at comorbidities as may be determined by the accepting LGUs.

Isa-isahin naman natin po ang bawal o hindi pupuwede sa Alert Level 3 'no. Ito po ang mga bawal: Face to face or in person classes for basic education; contact sports except those na kinu-conduct po sa bubble-type setup 'no. Number three, iyong funfair, perya and amusement industries, iyon mga playgrounds, playrooms, kiddie rides – bawal pa rin po. Iyong mga venues with live voice or wind instrument performance and audiences, mga karaoke bawal pa rin po ha, clubs, concert halls at theater; iyong mga casinos, horse racing, cockfighting and operation of cockpits, lottery and other betting stations and other gaming establishments, except when authorized by the IATF or the Office of the President. At saka iyong mga gathering in residences with individuals not belonging to the same household.

Bawal pa rin po iyang pagtitipon sa mga bahay-bahay na hindi kasama sa mga kasama sa bahay 'no.

Ano naman po ang allowed? Well, ang allowed po: Ang general rule is 30% indoor venue pero para lang po iyan sa fully vaccinated 'no at 50% outdoor venue para sa lahat, whether or not fully vaccinated or hindi vaccinated. Kasama na po rito sa rule na 30% ay ang MICE – iyong

Meetings, Incentives, Conferences and Exhibitions; iyong social events para sa mga venues para sa mga parties, wedding receptions, engagement parties, etc.; iyong mga visitor or tourist attractions gaya po ng mga libraries, archives, museums, galleries, exhibits, parks, plazas, public gardens, scenic viewpoints or overlooks, amusement parks or theme parks; iyong recreational venues gaya po ng internet cafés, billiard halls, amusement arcades, bowling alleys, skating rinks, archery halls, swimming pools at similar venue; cinemas and movies houses, pero 30% po lang ha, vaccinated. At saka iyong mga examinations na puwede nang ma-administer, mga entrance/qualifying examinations ng mga iba't ibang government agencies at mga iba pang mga test at examinations na na-approve ng IATF.

Kasama rin po sa pupuwede na na 30% indoor venue para sa mga fully vaccinated at 50% para sa outdoor ay ang in person religious gatherings, kasama na po diyan iyong para sa mga necrological service, wakes, inurnment, funerals para po doon sa mga namatay other than COVID-19 at saka iyong cremains of COVID-19 deceased; iyong mga dine-in services po ngayon 'no, 30% iyan for fully vaccinated, 50% for outdoor; iyong personal care establishment, mga barbero, hair spas, hair salons, nail salons, iyong mga aesthetic, cosmetic services procedures, mga make-up services, salons, spa, reflexology and other similar procedure; ang mga gyms and fitness studios patuloy pong bukas sila; at saka ang mga film, music, TV productions subject to the guidelines po na inisyu ng DTI, DOLE at ng DOH.

Now, samantala, inaprubahan din po ng inyong IATF ang paglalagay ng mga sumusunod sa lugar sa ilalim ng MECQ. Basahin po natin 'no. Ang MECQ po ay ang … sa Luzon po: Ang mga probinsiya ng Apayao, Kalinga, Batanes, Bulacan, Cavite, Rizal, Laguna at Naga City. Sa Mindanao: Sa Zamboanga City po at Zamboanga del Norte.

Ito naman po ang mga lugar na nasa ilalim ng GCQ with heightened restrictions: Sa Luzon – Abra, Baguio City, Ilocos Sur, Pangasinan, Cagayan, Isabela, City of Santiago, Nueva Vizcaya, Quirino, Quezon at Batangas; sa Visayas po, ito po ang mga lugar 'no – Bacolod City, Capiz, Lapu-Lapu City, Negros Oriental, Bohol; at sa Mindanao – Zamboanga del Sur, Misamis Oriental, Cagayan de Oro City, Davao del Norte, Davao Occidental, Davao de Oro, Butuan City at Surigao del Sur.

Ang mga lugar na mapapasailim po sa GCQ ay sa Ilocos Norte, Dagupan City, Ifugao, Benguet, Tarlac, Lucena City, Oriental Mindoro, Puerto Princesa, Marinduque, Albay, Camarines Norte; sa Visayas po, ang mga probinsiya ng Aklan, Antique, Guimaras, Negros Occidental, kasama na po ang Iloilo City, ang Iloilo Province, ang Cebu City, ang Cebu Province, ang Mandaue City, Siquijor, Tacloban City; sa Mindanao po, kasama po diyan ang Zamboanga Sibugay, Misamis Occidental Iligan City, Davao City, Davao Oriental, Davao del Sur, General Santos City, Sultan Kudarat, Sarangani, North Cotabato, South Cotabato, Agusan del Norte, Agusan del Sur, Surigao del Norte, Dinagat Island, Cotabato City at Lanao del Sur.

Lahat po ng lugar na hindi nabanggit ay nasa ilalim po ng MGCQ.

Sa balitang bakuna naman po. Naku po, halos 51 million na po or 50,966,144 doses na ang total vaccines administered ayon po sa October 13, 2021 National COVID-19 Dashboard. Nasa 30.8% na po ang fully vaccinated or katumbas ito ng mahigit na 23 million na katao. Dito naman po sa

Metro Manila, 91.82% na ang nabakunahan or halos siyam na milyon or 8,976,489 ang nakatanggap ng first dose. 78.95 na po ang fully vaccinated or 7,718,283 na katao.

Nagsimula na po ang bakunahan sa college students. Nagkaroon ng vaccine rollout kahapon, October 13, sa Mabalacat City College at Our Lady of Fatima University sa pangunguna ng Commission on Higher Education. Nasa 800 students ng Mabalacat City College ang nakatanggap ng first dose, samantala nasa 700 students naman po ang nakatanggap ng first dose sa Our Lady of Fatima University sa San Fernando, Pampanga. Ito po ang ilan sa mga larawan.

Sa COVID-19 update: Nasa 7,181 ang nai-report na mga bagong kaso ayon po sa October 13, 2021 datos ng DOH; lampas dalawa't kalahating milyon or 2,567,975 ang mga gumaling. Patuloy ang pagtaas ng ating recovery rate, nasa 95.4% na ito. Patuloy naman po ang pagbaba ng positivity rate natin na nasa 14.2%.

Huwag nating kalimutan po ang mag-mask, hugas, iwas at maging ligtas sa COVID-19 at huwag pumunta sa 3Cs – closed, crowded, close contacts. Siyempre po dahil marami na ang bakuna, pabakuna na po tayo.

Samantala, nasa 40,069 na po ang binawian ng buhay dahil sa coronavirus, nakikiramay po kami. Nasa 1.49 po ang ating case fatality rate.

Ito naman po ang kalagayan ng ating mga ospital: Sa buong Pilipinas, 67% na lang po ang utilized ICU beds – moderate risk. Sa Metro Manila, mas mababa pa po ito, 65%. Sa buong Pilipinas, 52% lang po ang okupado na isolation beds; sa Metro Manila, mas mababa pa po- 44%. Pagdating naman po sa war beds, 52% ang okupado sa buong Pilipinas; 48% lamang po sa Metro Manila. Ang mga ventilators, 49% po ang utilized at 50% po sa Metro Manila.

Dito po nagtatapos ang ating briefing. Makakasama po natin ngayon si World Health Organization Representative to the Philippines, Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe.

Doc, thank you for joining us again. You are already our suki. But please tell us what was the reason WHO recommendation as far as third dose is concerned for those vaccinated with Sinovac or Sinopharm?

WHO REP. DR. ABEYASINGHE: Thank you, Secretary Roque and it's always a pleasure to join you here.

This is a very important question because WHO has been looking very closely at the evidence evolving globally in light of the discussions for additional doses. And I want to take this opportunity to articulate that the strategic advisory group on vaccines. As [unclear] the data and we are now in a position to say that for people with immunocompromised conditions who have been unable to develop full immunity, WHO is supporting a third dose as an extended primary course.

I want to differentiate this from the concept of boosters which we generally talk for general populations. So, this is specifically for those who in at risk because of their

immunocompromised conditions who are unable to develop and sustain the required level of protection from the primary course of two doses of one dose.

For these individuals, WHO is now recommending an extended primary course which included a third dose. At the same time, we are also looking at the evolving evidence from individual vaccines and you know, we had some concerns initially about the capacity and the immunogenicity of some vaccine brands.

And based on the—particularly among the elderly groups and so [unclear] the data, the [unclear] is now recommending that we consider the elderly population or the A2 population who have received a primary vaccination course with either Sinovac or Sinopharm as eligible who need to receive a third dose of the same vaccine brand to potentiate its immunogenicity.

So, our recommendation now is that in addition to immunocompromised individuals, that would include all individuals who have received a primary vaccination course of two doses with Sinovac or Sinopharm to receive a third dose provided it's more than three months since the completion of the first two doses.

So, that's a position now. We will be waiting for the decision of the national authorities but this is WHO position.

Thank you.

SEC. ROQUE: Can we clarify, Dr. Rabindra? So, the recommendation is all individuals who are vaccinated with Sinovac or Sinopharm be given third dose or is it limited only to the medical, frontliners, those with comorbidities and the seniors?

WHO REP. DR. ABEYASINGHE: On the seniors, at this point of time; of course, those with comorbidities who we recognize as people who are immunocompromised even if they are less than 60 years, we will advocate for the third dose.

SEC. ROQUE: Okay. But the general population, they do not need a third dose yet?

WHO REP. DR. ABEYASINGHE: We don't have a recommendation for general population.

SEC. ROQUE: Okay. Thank you for the clarification, Doctor Rabindra. And I'm sure our colleagues at the Malacañang Press Corps will have questions for you.

Let's proceed now sa ating open forum. Go ahead please, USec. Rocky.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes. Good afternoon, Secretary Roque. Good afternoon, Dr. Rabi.

From Leila Salaverria of Inquirer, question: Now that COVID vaccination is open to the general population and officials say the supply is stable, how likely is it that the President will make COVID vaccination mandatory? Will he ask Congress to approve a bill for this and if yes, when?

SEC. ROQUE: That's for Congress to enact if Congress wishes so 'no. But right now because the supplies have just arrived 'no, let's see because I think the level of vaccination—the level of individuals who want to be vaccinated 'no is already very high 'no so baka hindi pa naman kinakailangan sa ngayon.

So napakadami pong gusto nang mabakunahan at since nandiyan na po ang supply eh ubusin muna natin 'yung gustong mabakunahan bago natin pag-isipan 'yung pagpasa ng batas para maging mandatory po ang pagbabakuna.

USEC. IGNACIO: Second question ni Leila Salaverria: The President said those who are hesitant to get the vaccine are a problem. While vaccination is not yet mandatory, what will the government do about those who still refuse to get the jab?

SEC. ROQUE: Dalawang bagay po 'no – mataas po ang gusto ng mga—'yung kagustuhan ng kababayan natin na mabakunahan, dati-rati po kulang nga po ang supply. So ngayon po ang sinasabi na natin mayroon na po tayong supply so protektahan natin ang ating mga sarili, ang ating mga mahal sa buhay sa pamamagitan po ng pagbabakuna.

At makikita ninyo naman po ang government communication ay wala pong tigil ang paghihikayat sa ating mga mamamayan na magpabakuna na.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Question from Daphne Galvez ng Inquirer.net: The new alert level system will still be only implemented over Metro Manila. When will this be expanded to other areas? How long will the pilot study run for until the IATF arrives at a conclusion that it is effective? Similar question with Danisa Fernandez ng Inquirer.net.

SEC. ROQUE: Kakatapos lang naman po noong first pilot 'no. 'Antayin natin na i-analyze ng mga dalubhasa ang mga datos para magkaroon tayo ng conclusion po. So, 'antayin lang po natin ang komento ng mga dalubhasa kung successful o hindi itong pilot.

USEC. IGNACIO: From Rosalie Coz ng UNTV: Posible bang payagan muli ng Pangulo ang rekomendasyong deployment ban ng DOLE sa Saudi Arabia kaugnay ng mga 'di nababayarang sahod sa OFWs? Ano ang deciding factor ng Presidente dito at paano matutulungan ang mga apektadong kababayan?

SEC. ROQUE: Dadaanin po muna ng aking BFF na si Secretary Bello sa usapin itong bagay na ito 'no. Siya po'y patungo sa Middle East kung hindi po akong nagkakamali ng buwan na ito 'no, 22 o 23 'no para makipag-usap nga po sa mga awtoridad doon sa mga bansa sa Middle East.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Second question po niya: May maaari bang gawing intervention o hakbang ang Palasyo kaugnay sa posibilidad na hindi makapagbigay ng 13th month pay ang mga employers dahil sa impact pa rin ng pandemic sa mga negosyo? Ano ang maaaring maitulong sa mga negosyante't manggagawa upang mas magiging mainam ang Disyembre ngayong taon bukod sa isinusulong na 'Ingat Buhay Para sa Hanapbuhay'?

SEC. ROQUE: Alam ninyo po kasi naging issue na 'yan noong isang taon, iyong nakalipas na taon kung puwedeng ma-exempt iyong pagbabayad ng 13th month pay. Ang sagot po hindi dahil 'yan po ay batas. Pero dahil alam natin na maraming mga small and medium scale industries na nahihirapan nga po dahil nag-lockdown na naman tayo 'no eh magbibigay naman po ng assistance ang ating gobyerno sa pamamagitan ng Small Business Corporation 'no para doon sa mga small and medium scale industries na kinakailangan ng tulong pambayad sa 13th month pay.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Question from Daphne Galvez ng Inquirer.net: Health Secretary Duque claims he was not consulted on the decision to lift the quarantine requirement for vaccinated travellers from green countries saying he was absent during the meeting as well as Secretary Galvez and Secretary Año. He raised some concerns on the issue pointing out that the vaccine coverage in the Philippines which is at 30% is still low therefore it is not yet advisable to do this. How was the decision to lift the requirement made where health experts consulted when Secretary Duque himself was not there? Who made the proposal to lift it? Similar question with Ivan Mayrina ng GMA News, Maricel Halili TV-5 and Reymund Tinaza ng Bombo Radyo.

SEC. ROQUE: Alam ninyo po, marami kaming wala doon kasi akala namin magtu-Talk to the People sa Davao. So lahat po kaming magkakasama sa Davao wala sa meeting kahapon. Pero kahapon po vinerify ko kung sinong naruroon, nandoon naman po si Dr. Edsel Salvaña at siya po'y nag-manifest na minimal naman daw po ang risk galing dito sa mga green countries kasi nga po kaya sila naging green countries, napakababa po ng kaso ng COVID so—tapos mayroon pang PCR test. Bukod pa kay Dr. Edsel Salvaña, nandoon po si Usec. Vergeire, nandoon din po si Dr. Alethea ng Epidemiological Bureau.

Ganoon pa man, itong polisiya naman pong ito ay effective lamang para sa isang araw. Bakit po? Kasi 'yung green list rerepasuhin po 'yan pagdating po ng November 16. So mamayang hapon po pag-uusapan at titingnan nga kung ano 'yung mga nasa green list.

Pero I'd like to assure you kanina na-interview ako ni Erwin Tulfo, natawa nga kaming dalawa kasi kasama doon sa mga green list ang mga country gaya ng Nauru, Eritrea, Tajikistan, Tonga – at ang tanong nga ni Erwin kanina, napakadami bang Pilipinong nanggagaling dito 'no – Bhutan, Kiribati…

So sinasabi ko, effective siya for one day kasi bukas irirepaso iyong list ng green list at saka kakaunti lang po talaga ang mga Pilipino na nanggagaling o kahit sino pang mga biyahero nanggagaling dito sa mga green list countries. Bagama't kasama po sa green list na iyon ay ang mga bansang Tsina 'no at saka ang bansang New Zealand at ang bansang… ano pa ba? Iyon po 'yung mga more or less popular amongst Philippine travellers. Pero iyong iba po talaga kaunti lang mga Pilipino iyan – American Samoa, Cayman Islands, Comoros, Falkland Islands, Mali, Palau, Saint Pierre and Miquelon – ito po talaga 'yung mga bansa na pati sa aking eleksiyon sa ILC ay napakahirap ma-contact. [laughs]

USEC. IGNACIO: Secretary, clarification: October 16 rerepasuhin 'yung green list not November 16 na na-mention mo kani-kanina lang, Secretary.

SEC. ROQUE: Oo, Oktubre na nga pala tayo. October 16 po. Maraming salamat, Usec. Rocky. Mamaya po pagpupulungan muli ‘yan para irepaso po kung ano ‘yung mga green list; pero gaya ng aking sinabi, itong mga lugar na saksakan nang baba naman ang kaso ng COVID at wala naman pong risk ‘no. Pero ganoon pa man titingnan po natin at saka wala naman pong permanent na resolution tayo, kung mayroon talagang tumaas na mga kaso sa mga bansang green list, pupuwede naman pong repasuhin ang polisiya.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Question from Danisa Fernandez ng Inquirer.net: May we get your statement on President Duterte’s remark on vaccinating hesitant people while sleeping?

SEC. ROQUE: Joke lang po iyon, kayo naman ‘no. Siyempre naman ‘no, ang tagal noong mga pagpupulong namin sa Talk to the People, ang nakikita ninyo kapiraso lang po – mahaba ‘yung mga meetings na ‘yun. Para hindi kami makatulog kailangan naman eh may konting joke.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. From Maricel Halili ng TV-5: Philippine College of Physicians President Dr. Maricar Limpin admits most health workers are apprehensive of easing restriction in the NCR despite decrease in COVID-19 cases. Limpin says while the situation is not as bad as before, many hospitals are still operating near full capacity. What can you say about this?

SEC. ROQUE: Naku, ewan ko po kung saan niya kinuha ang datos niya. Pero ang datos po namin eh napakaganda po ng ating health care utilization rate ngayon ‘no: Sa ICU beds sa Metro Manila 65% lang po ang nagagamit, moderate risk; 44% ang isolation; 48% ang ward beds at 50% ang ventilators.

Kinakailangan po kung maaalagaan naman natin ang mga seryosong magkakasakit, bigyan po natin ng hanapbuhay ang ating mga kababayan. Huwag po tayong lockdown nang lockdown kasi nga po wala pong tamad na Pilipino, gusto lang nila ng pagkakataon na makapaghanapbuhay.

So ngayon po at 65% occupancy ng ICU beds, kaya po nating alagaan ang mga seryosong magkakasakit. Pero sa Metro Manila nga po, halos otsenta porsiyento na rin ang mga bakunado so asahan natin na kung magkaka-COVID man ‘yung tinatawag nating—anong tawag doon? Anong tawag doon sa nabakunahan na pero nagkaka-infection pa rin? Breakthrough infection eh napakakonti po nito - .00025 nga ‘ata ang sinabi ni Dr. Domingo ‘no. At saka pangalawa, eh inaasahan nga natin na iyong kaunting magkakasakit na breakthrough infection ay hindi po ito seryosong magkakasakit. Hanapbuhay muna po ang ating asikasuhin ngayong 65% po ang ICU bed capacity natin.

USEC. IGNACIO: From Aileen Taliping ng Abante Tonite: Puwede na bang lumabas ang senior citizens sa Alert Level 3? Sino lang ang mga papayagan kung sakali?

SEC. ROQUE: Kung bakunado, dahil binigyan po nating incentive ‘yan sa mga seniors pupuwede. Kung hindi bakunado, para lang po sa mga essentials at para po maghanapbuhay.

USEC. IGNACIO: From Einjhel Ronquillo ng DZXL-RMN: Anong basis daw po sa no facility-based quarantine sa mga fully vaccinated foreign nationals and returning Filipinos?

SEC. ROQUE: Well, ito po ay base naman sa siyensiya, kasi para lang po iyan sa green list countries. Ulitin ko po na iyong karamihan ng mga pinanggagalingan ng Filipino, yellow list countries po iyon, subject pa rin to five-day facility quarantine and PCR on the fifth day at saka home quarantine for additional five days.

USEC. IGNACIO: Yes, from Einjhel Ronquillo pa rin po: Pupuwede na ba ang foreign tourist na makapasok sa bansa?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi pa po. Wala pa po tayong foreign tourists; mga long staying visa holders lang po.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Third question niya: May short list na ba sa magiging bagong PNP Chief? Magriretiro na kasi si PNP Chief sa November 13.

SEC. ROQUE: Well, iyon nga po, nakakalungkot na may retirement age si Chief Eleazar, sana panghabambuhay ng Chief si Eleazar ‘no. Pero siyempre po, mayroon naman pong short list ang Malacañang; hindi ko nga lang po pupuwedeng sabihin kung sinu-sino ito.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. From Llanesca Panti ng GMA News Online: Spox Roque said during Monday briefing that there is no vaccine shortage anymore. But President Duterte in Talk to the People, he is to blame over vaccine shortage. Which is which, may shortage ba o wala?

SEC. ROQUE: Sa ngayon po, wala; pero sa nakaraan, napakatindi po, kasi nga po 85% ng ating mga bakuna napunta noong una, noong mga unang parte ng taon sa mga mayayamang bansa. Eh ngayon po sunud-sunod nga po ang pagdating. Ang cumulative po na natanggap na natin is around 88 million vaccines. At inaasahan natin na bago matapos ang Oktubre, we will have accumulative of 100 million vaccines. So, sagana po tayo ngayon sa vaccines.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Question from Llanesca Panti pa rin po ng GMA News Online: SWS Poll showed 91% of Filipinos are afraid that their family getting infected with COVID-19. Does this mean that the public is not confident with the government’s COVID-19 response? Why or why not?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi po, ang kinakatakutan nila iyong virus. At dapat lang po kayong matakot ha, kasi kapag hindi kaya nag-mask, hugas, iwas at bakuna, talagang puwede kayong magkasakit at puwede kayong mamatay; dapat po katakutan iyan. Pero kapag tayo ay nag-mask, hugas, iwas at bakuna, puwede tayong maghanapbuhay.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Tinatanong lang din po ni Llanesca: Puwede na po ba daw ang outdoor o indoor basketball?

SEC. ROQUE: Noong binasa ko po kanina, pupuwede lang iyan kung bubble-type at saka mayroong relevant guidelines adopted by the IATF, the Games Amusement Board at iba pa, iyong approved ng LGU.

USEC. IGNACIO: From Kris Jose ng Remate/Remate Online: Humihingi po siya ng update kung kailan daw po ipapalabas ang guidelines sa pagpapaluwag sa paggamit ng face shield?

SEC. ROQUE: Lumabas na po, lumabas na po ang guidelines. This is dated September 23, 2021. Well, hindi, lumabas na po itong joint memo circular, numbered pa lang. Basahin ko po ano, ang face shield ay kinakailangan lamang sa mga 3Cs at ito po ang mga guidelines: Sa mga community, iyong sa labas ng residence, mandatory po ito sa closed, crowded and contact.

Ano po itong mga 3Cs settings? Kasama po dito ang indoor activities and settings, lalung-lalo na kung mayroong crowding or high risk of exposure dahil nga po sa nature ng activity. This may include activities in commercial establishments, public transport, among others. Indoor and outdoor dining except during actual eating of meals, indoor and outdoor gatherings or crowded setting especially when the one-meter physical distance is not possible. This will include indoor and outdoor commercial establishments, food establishments, malls, public markets, transport terminals and PUV stops. Indoor and other activities that promote close contact such as personal care services among others, other activities, not otherwise specified that follow the 3Cs framework.

Okay, so lumabas na po itong joint memorandum circular signed by Secretaries Duque, Lopez, Bello, Año, Villar and Tugade.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. From Lei Alviz ng GMA News for Dr. Rabi: The vaccination of 12 to 17 years old with comorbidities will begin tomorrow. May we ask for a comment from WHO.

DR. ABEYSINGHE: Thank you, USec. Rocky. WHO strongly supports this, this is a stage recommendation, adolescents between 12 to 17 years who have comorbidities. We are encouraging them to be included in the primary group of vaccination for vulnerable population. So, we support this.

USEC. IGNACIO: From Prince Golez of Abante. Secretary Roque: Dr. Tony Leachon has raised concern about the opening of cinemas in areas under Alert Level 3. He said this will put individuals at higher risk for COVID-19, citing possible crowded audiences and poor ventilation. Does the Palace think that it’s already safe to head back to the movies and why?

SEC. ROQUE: Hindi po kami matatakot sa kahit anong rekomendasyon ni Dr. Leachon. Unang-una, ito po ay para sa mga bakunado lamang. Pangalawa po 30% seating capacity, wala po iyang magkakatabi. Tapos number three, mayroon pang guidelines na inisyu po ng ating DOH na kinakailangan may ventilation, may use of air purifier system.

Isipin din po natin iyong mga naghahanapbuhay na related sa mga sinehan. Hindi lang po iyan iyong mga sinehan mismo, kung hindi iyong mga artista, mga cameramen, mga extras lahat po sila nakasalalay diyan sa hanapbuhay. Hanapbuhay po ang pinag-uusapan at hindi po natin sinasakripisyo ang kalusugan ha, kasi nga po dumating na tayo sa punto na halos 80% na rin ang bakunado dito sa Metro Manila.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. From Red Mendoza ng Manila Times for Dr. Rabi: Presidential Adviser Joey Concepcion said in a previous interview that the WHO does not understand his proposal of vaccine bubble after you said that the bubble may burst. What can you say about this?

DR. ABEYSINGHE: Thank you, USec. Rocky. The understanding is that we don't have enough vaccine coverage in the country to create bubbles. The discrepancy on coverage is very significant and there is no way that we can maintain the intactness of a bubble. So, between those circumstances, I think it's premature to talk about bubble because vaccine coverage in the country is only 30% at this point in time.

SEC. ROQUE: Dr. Rabi, follow up. What about in Metro Manila? When we hit 80% or higher, is that a possibility for Metro Manila?

DR. ABEYSINGHE: If we can also reach similar levels of coverage in the adjoining NCR plus areas because we know that there is a very high movement of people between III and IV-A, particularly coming to both and for trade activities into NCR. So, in those circumstances, it may be premature to create bubbles in NCR because undoubtedly there will be people with low coverage coming to those bubbles.

So, our contention is that if we can achieve the reach of higher coverage in III and IV-A, then we may be able to look at it because then the number of people coming into the bubble will be significantly less who are unvaccinated.

SEC. ROQUE: Thank you for that. So talagang dapat na—dahil marami na nga ang bakuna 'no, iyong mga LGU po ng Region III, Region IV-A, paumanhin po, talaga namang nagkulang ang bakuna noong una. Pero ngayong nandiyan na po, paspasan na tayo para talagang magkaroon tayo ng bubble sa NCR Plus.

Yes, next question please.

USEC. IGNACIO: Opo. Second question ni Red Mendoza ng Manila Times. Dr. Rabi, do you think the DOH was prudent in lowering restrictions?

DR. ABEYASINGHE: This is a global pandemic, and we talk about adjusting or calibrating the restriction because we don't want to talk about lowering or relaxing. It is important to understand that we are trying to manage and bring back as much as economic activity as possible while not putting people's lives at risk. So this adjusting and calibrating is important, and we need to be very clear in our communication. It's not about relaxing or reducing the restrictions; it's about calibrating so that we can continue to take risk[unclear] measures. We continue to urge the population to do everything – the physical distancing and hygiene, the mask wearing even though they are fully vaccinated because these are critically important to maintain the gains and further strengthen the transmission reduction. We now have less than 2,000 cases on the average, on the daily basis, here in NCR. We're going to see that going down further and so we need to be very careful in calibrating and adjusting the restrictions so that we don't that risk.

At the same time, we are also aware that in some regions, we're still seeing increase in trend and transmissions particularly in the regions that Spox Harry just mentioned, in Northern Luzon and some parts of Visayas and Mindanao. So we are not completely out of this and we need to be very careful about the messaging and the relaxation of the non-pharmaceutical interventions.

USEC. IGNACIO: Question from Ace Romero, Dr. Rabi. What is your comment on the easing of restrictions in Metro Manila which will be downgraded to Alert Level 3? What are the things that Metro Manila have to watch out for to avoid another surge in infections?

DR. ABEYASINGHE: Thank you. With the high vaccine coverage in Metro Manila, we believe that we need to adjust and calibrate the restrictions, and that's why WHO took up the position that we support the granular lockdowns; we support the easing of restrictions because [unclear] lockdowns have terrible economic consequences and affect the people negatively.

So we are supportive of this but we need to be very careful. That's why I said, we need to calibrate our response; we need to continue to urge the LGUs to ensure that access to testing is maintained. And we need to urge the population to do everything they can to quarantine or isolate themselves if they're having symptoms, not to go out so that they don't put other people at risk. This has to be a whole of society approach that everybody contributes to so that we can come out of this without going back into another surge.

So while the calibrations are important, we have to very careful in monitoring this and we need to be flexible enough to tighten restrictions in very granular areas if we see localized transmission happening within cities or within purok or barangay [unclear] occasionally.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Dr. Rabi. Secretary Roque, kung may Talk to the People daw po mamaya?

SEC. ROQUE: Wala pong naka-schedule mamaya kaya po tayo nag-press briefing.

USEC. IGNACIO: Thank you, Secretary Roque, Dr. Rabi.

SEC. ROQUE: Okay. So wala na po tayong mga katanungan, thank you very much to our guest – WHO Representative to the Philippines, Dr. Rabindra Abeyasinghe. Maraming salamat, Usec, Rocky. Maraming salamat sa ating mga kasama sa Malacañang Press Corps.

Sa ngalan po ng inyong Presidente, Rodrigo Roa Duterte, ito po ang inyong Spox Harry na nagsasabi: Pilipinas, malapit na po ang ating tagumpay laban dito sa COVID. Pero habang wala pa tayo doon ha, mask, hugas, iwas, bakuna. At napakaimportante po na ngayong mayroon na tayong supply, pabakuna na po tayo para po proteksiyon sa ating mga sarili at sa ating mga mahal sa buhay.

Magandang araw sa inyong lahat. Good afternoon, Philippines.

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