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PRESS BRIEFING OF PRESS SECRETARTY ATTY. TRIXIE CRUZ-ANGELES WITH DILG SECRETARY BENHUR ABALOS AND DOH OFFICER-IN-CHARGE DR. MA. ROSARIO VERGEIRE
September 7, 2022 (1:45 P.M. – 2:24 P.M.)

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magandang hapon, Malacañang Press Corps. Sa araw na ito, may kalahok tayo, si SILG Benhur Abalos; and, of course, si DOH OIC Dr. Rosario Vergeire. We will begin with Secretary Benhur Abalos.

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Magandang hapon po. Ngayong hapon ay pag-uusapan natin ang tungkol po rito sa mask mandate, tungkol sa outdoor na mask mandate, kung ito ay pupuwede po o hindi. Inuulit ko: Outdoor, sa labas. Dahil po ito ay nangyari sa Cebu kung kaya't ni-refer po natin ito sa IATF, at nagpulong po kami at nagkaroon na po ng pasya ang IATF dito. Iyon po ang rason kung bakit nagpatawag kami ng press conference para pag-usapan ang resulta nito at ito po ay ia-announce ni Secretary Trixie. Magandang hapon po.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Maraming salamat, Secretary Abalos. Ayon doon sa IATF, ang kanilang rekomendasyon ay sa pag-liberalize ng ating mask-wearing mandate, iyong mask mandate, and make mask-wearing outdoors voluntary across the country. Ulitin po natin: Outdoors po ito; ito ay nagiging optional in open spaces or non-crowded outdoor areas with good ventilation, provided that senior citizens and those immunocompromised individuals are highly encouraged to wear their masks, to continue wearing masks.

So, ipupuntirya lang po natin na kapag ang mga senior citizens at saka those who are immunocompromised, kahit po outdoors ay ini-encourage pa rin na magsuot ng mask; ang optional po ay in non-crowded outdoor areas with good ventilation.

Ang lifting, tuluyan na lifting ng mandatory mask mandate ay ipa-pilot towards the last quarter of 2022 provided na may improvement doon sa COVID-19 booster vaccination coverage. Ibig sabihin, nag-start ang ating pagbibilang ng coverage ng boosters was a few months ago – iko-confirm natin ito kay Usec. Vergeire – was just a little over 50%. So kailangang i-improve natin iyong statistics natin ng mga nagpa-booster na para by the end of the year, magpa-pilot test na po ng ating lifting of mandatory mask mandate.

Lahat ng mga ahensiya ng gobyerno ay hinihikayat na sumuporta sa National Booster Week from September 26 to 29 through the implementation of sector specific policies and incentives to encourage people to receive booster shots. So sa iba't ibang ahensiya, mayroon silang target na for implementation ng booster policy. Bahala ang mga ahensiya na magrekomenda o for encouragement or incentives sa mga magpapa-booster.

Ang IATF Resolution # 1 Series of 2022 ay nilagdaan nitong September 5, 2022. Uulitin po natin: This is a recommendation by the IATF to liberalize iyong mask-wearing mandate natin, iyong

compulsory mask-wearing dito sa Pilipinas. Hindi pa po ito polisiya ngunit ito na po ang nirirekomenda ng ating IATF. At rekomendado ito for outdoors, non-crowded areas with good ventilation; pero ang mga seniors and those immunocompromised ay hinihikayat pa rin na tuluyang magsuot ng mask.

I-turn over natin for comments. Si Undersecretary Rosario Vergeire.

DOH OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Hello. Magandang tanghali po sa inyong lahat. Of course, good afternoon to Secretary Trixie and Secretary Benhur Abalos.

So we're just confirming kung ano po ang naisaad ni Secretary Trixie na ito pong IATF Resolution kung saan nagrirekomenda po ang IATF sa ating Presidente to liberalize the use of mask outdoors. Ibig sabihin, sa labas po; hindi indoor.

And also, I would like to emphasize na ang atin pong pagsusuot ng mask ay highly encouraged pa rin, lalung-lalo na po sa ating mga nakakatanda or senior citizens and those vulnerable to the disease like those with immunocompromised conditions dahil sila po iyong talagang tinatamaan ng malubhang sakit ng COVID-19.

Kasama po sa resolusyon na ito, katulad ng nabanggit ni Secretary Trixie ay iyon pong ating paghingi ng tulong at mandato ng ating mga national government agencies na makipagtulungan sa atin kung saan they will be implementing policies and interventions so that they can help national government to encourage further our citizens to receive their first booster shot.

Katulad po ng nasabi ni Secretary Trixie also, ito pong indoor masking, pag-aaralan pa ho patuloy ng IATF kasama ng ating mga eksperto. At gagawa tayo ng parang pilot study on this so that we can determine kung kakayanin na po ng ating health sector ang pagli-lift ng indoor masking towards the end of the year if booster coverage will improve in our country.

So tayo po ay humihingi ng tulong sa ating mga kababayan, sana po tayo ay magkaisa para po tayo makarating doon sa ating mga goal of furthering the opening up our sectors but at the same time, ensuring that our Filipino people are protected from COVID-19.

ASEC. DE VERA: We are now opening the floor for questions to [DOH OIC] Usec. Vergeire and Secretary Abalos. Ms. Evelyn Quiroz?

EVELYN QUIROZ/PILIPINO MIRROR: Good afternoon, Secretary Vergeire. Ang tanong ko lang po: Na-mention ninyo po kanina iyong recommendation na pag-aaralan pa lang po iyong pilot – sa indoor po ito, sa indoor?

DOH OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Yes, ma'am. So iyon pong sa indoor policy natin for mask-wearing, napagkasunduan po ng Inter-Agency Task Force na umpisahan na ho ang pag-aaral ng ating mga eksperto ukol po dito sa pagsasagawa nitong pagli-lift ng masks sa indoor areas.

Kailangan pong maintindihan ng ating mga kababayan, we need to this in phases so that we can ensure that our population is protected from COVID-19.

So ang gagawin po natin, tayo po ngayon ay kumakalap na ng iba't ibang ebidensiya. Gumagawa na rin po tayo ng concept paper kung saan iyong study kung paano natin gagawin iyong pagpa-pilot. When we say pilot, we are going to implement this kind of implementation sa piling lugar sa ating bansa para makita natin kung kakayanin na ng ating sistema o hindi.

EVELYN QUIROZ/PILIPINO MIRROR: Secretary, iyong tungkol naman [sa requirement], kasi po kapag may mga coverage kami, mayroong requirement na fully vaccinated. Kapag sinabi ninyo po bang fully vaccinated, iyong dalawa lang po o kailangan po kasama iyong dalawang booster shots?

DOH OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Sa ngayon po, ang ating definition ng fully vaccinated individual is just that two doses, the first two doses – iyong primary series. Hindi pa po kasama iyong ating booster shots sa definition ng fully vaccinated.

So if the requirement is a fully vaccinated individual and you have your first two doses, then you are fully vaccinated.

HANNAH SANCHO/DZAR: Good afternoon, Dr. Vergeire. Ano po iyong naging consideration natin to finally recommend to President Marcos na puwede na nating luwagan iyong pagsusuot ng facemask outdoor po? Kasi iyong ibang bansa ay nauna na po sa atin pero it took as time 'di ba, so ano ang naging consideration natin para magdesisyon po?

DOH OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Maraming pag-aaral ang isinagawa. Actually, mayroon din pong nai-present din ang iba't iba nating miyembro from the IATF about experiences from other countries. Kapag tiningnan po natin iyong mga datos natin ngayon at kung ano iyong naging desisyon ng IATF, we want to emphasize the confidence of our officials sa ating bakuna, kung saan itong mga bakuna ay nakapagbigay sa atin ng stable at manageable ang ating mga kaso ng COVID-19. And therefore, with this recommendation, the IATF recommended that there would be this optional policy for mask-wearing for those low-risk individuals and in low-risk settings.

So ibig sabihin po, ni-liberalize natin iyong paggamit ng mask sa outdoors pero doon sa low-risk na individuals, meaning, hindi sila matanda, hindi sila immunocompromised; and low-risk setting, ibig sabihin, doon sa mga areas na hindi matao at saka maayos ang kanilang hangin.

HANNAH SANCHO/DZAR: Clarification lang. Buong bansa na po tayo na ipatutupad ito?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Yes, this is nationwide.

JOB MANAHAN/ABS-CBN: This question is for Usec. Vergeire. Good afternoon, Usec. This is Job Manahan po from ABS-CBN News. Mag-aantay pa po ba ng approval for President Marcos

regarding this recommendation and how soon can we get feedback from the President regarding this or may thoughts na po kaya siya regarding this proposal?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Yes, sir 'no. So actually the very reason why we are having this presscon and initially informing the public of this was because there was this verbal approval from the President when they talked with Secretary Benhur from DILG. But it stated in the IATF Resolution No. 1 Series of 2022 kung saan nakalagay that the IATF has resolved to recommend to the President and that there should be, or the President will issue an executive order regarding this policy.

So, kung narinig ninyo kanina, sinabi po ni Secretary Trixie kanina, hindi pa 'to polisiya kasi kailangan mailagay natin sa ganitong klaseng legal instrument before it becomes a policy. What we are doing right now is initially informing the public so that everybody is informed about the IATF resolution. And again, the President has given his verbal approval when the Secretary of DILG called him.

JOB MANAHAN/ABS-CBN: Thank you very much po.

CLEIZL PARDILLA/PTV-4: Good morning po. For Usec. Vergeire. Kung pagbabasehan po iyong improvement ng booster rate, at what number po puwedeng masabi na tumaas iyong booster at puwedeng simulan po iyong voluntary wearing of masks? Thank you.

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Thank you. Katulad ng sabi natin, we'll do this in a phase approach. We cannot be—hindi natin puwedeng madaliin dahil gusto natin sinisiguro natin na protektado lagi ang ating mga kababayan and there are safeguards. So ang gagawin po natin mayroon tayong phase approach, sabi natin noon dito sa PinasLakas campaign for the first 100 days, we targeted 50% at least of the eligible population for the first booster shot and nakita natin na napakabagal talaga ng uptake nitong first booster shot.

So, we said doon po sa IATF, nag-present kami noong Lunes, sinabi natin at least 30% pagdating ng first 100 days and then we do the progressive improvement or increase in the targets as the number of days or months go by. Pero dito sa pilot ng indoor, kasama po iyan sa pinag-aaralan natin ng ating mga eksperto. What would be the safe level or threshold or target na dapat marating natin para we can then lift the restrictions for masks sa indoors.

JULIE BAIZA/ONE NEWS PH: Usec. Vergeire, before the IATF decision, may ilang health professionals po na nagbabala na dangerous iyong relaxation of minimum public health protocols as it could lead daw po to fewer people na taking their booster shots. So, paano po natin masisigurado ngayon na mas mai-encourage iyong public na magpa-booster shot given na gagawin na nating—hindi na po mandatory iyong pagsusuot ng mask outdoor?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Kailangan naiintindihan po ng ating mga kababayan iyong ating risk factors. So ang risk factors ho natin nami-mitigate iyan kapag mayroon po tayong mga pinapatupad na different measures. So, we have our mask-wearing, physical distancing,

mayroong frequent handwashing, good ventilation at saka iyong ating bakuna. So ‘pag tiningnan natin, kapag nagawa mo lahat iyan – that’s six out of six – you have adequate protection.

Ngayon it will be something of a health-seeking behavior, a good behavior from our kababayans na kailangan they also know their risk and they will know if for them, they will voluntarily remove their masks or not. Pero kailangan naiintindihan din ng ating mga kababayan na ito po ay isang bagay na iyong risk should be mitigated based on the recommendations also from the IATF where in the resolution you would find na sinabi rin po at rekomendasyon ng Department na ang bawat ahensiya po ng gobyerno will implement policies and interventions so that we can further encourage our citizens to have their first booster shots.

And by saying that, where government agencies may also do their mandates or have that mandate where puwede naman na magpapatupad sila ng isang polisiya kung saan mas pinapaboran ang mga mas may booster shot kaysa doon po sa hindi pa nagpapa-booster. So, these are the incentives and disincentives that we can do so that we can further encourage our citizens to receive their first booster shot.

JOB MANAHAN/ABS-CBN: Good afternoon po, Usec. Follow up question lang po ‘no. How soon can the President act on the recommendation po of the IATF? May timeline po kaya na binigay si President Marcos?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: There is no timeline that has been given. We all know that the President now is in another task ‘no, abroad. So aantayin po natin siya but nandito naman po sila Executive Secretary so everything is being prepared, nakipag-usap na rin naman po tayo so we’ll just wait for the issuance. But definitely and we think because based from the feedback na talagang pabor naman ang President so the executive order can be issued immediately.

JOB MANAHAN/ABS-CBN: Okay po. Next follow-up po, Usec. Since this is still a recommendation po, what will happen po doon sa EO ng Cebu City on making this optional po ‘no? Tapos ano po iyong-what awaits LGUs like Cebu City that implement non-obligatory mask-wearing po outdoors ahead of the implementation?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: So, I’ll defer this to Secretary Benhur. Sec…

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Magandang hapon po. Well, I’ve got here Republic Act No. 11332 okay. It says that… this is about law on reporting of communicable diseases ‘no. Ito ‘yung sinasabi nating state of public health emergency at pagkatapos nito nagkaroon po tayo ng isang executive order, ng ating Pangulong Duterte ‘no na kung saan crineate [created] ang IATF.

Let me cite to you ‘yung pinakadulo nito. Prohibited acts ‘no… so nakalagay dito iyong mga dapat gawin, etcetera – non-cooperation of persons and entities that should report and/or

respond to notifiable diseases or health events or public concern. Ibig sabihin non-cooperation and failure to respond to notifiable disease of health events of public concern, and non-cooperation of the persons or entities that identify as having the notifiable disease or affected by the health event of public concern 'no.

So ito 'yung sinasabi kong national law 'no. Of course they are claiming autonomy about this 'no. Ang punto rito is that we are already at a point na tapos na iyong issue eh. Primarily tapos na po ito, tama po si Usec. Vergeire nakausap natin ang Presidente and he's amenable to this. Siguro… in fact ang dami sa aming tumatawag na ibang LGU, they also want to have their own mask mandate 'no – kung puwede raw tanggalin na rin daw kaya pina-hold na lang namin lahat.

Ako naman is that… bawat isa sa atin ay gustong… kung anong maganda sa bawat lugar. I know the intention but please 'no, dahil nga rito ay magtulungan na lang tayo 'no. Tapos na ito, may IATF na… kailangan natin ng iisang body na nagbibigay ng polisiya. We are archipelagic, hindi po puwede magkakaniya-kaniya tayo at magkakagulo-gulo tayo rito 'no. Anyway for me, tapos na ito – this is already moot and academic. Sundan na natin ito but next time around kung mayroon naman diyan na gagalaw at sinasabi nga ni Usec. Vergeire about the indoor… we have really to implement this one 'no. Talagang didisiplinahin na natin iyan.

But right now, anyway lahat naman tayo talagang gustong tumulong. Tapos na itong issue na ito 'no… let it stay at that. But for the meantime let me just add 'no doon sa sinabi rin ni Usec. Vergeire. Just let me show to you some tables, ito iyong ibang pinalabas during the deliberation 'no. Ito iyong bansa, para lang alam ng ating mga nakikinig ngayon. Sa ibang bansa: sa Brunei, tinanggal na po iyong mask-wearing sa labas noong April 29, 2022; Sa Cambodia ganoon din, it's no longer mandatory noong April 2022; sa Indonesia mask outdoors is not anymore mandatory noong May 17; sa Malaysia, mandatory indoors and in public transport 'no, May 1, 2022; sa Singapore, required only for six years old and above in health care facilities and public transport, this was August 29, 2022; Thailand is only voluntary, June 24 at sa Vietnam, it's mandatory in public transport and crowded public places.

In short, iyong nag-present nga ang sinabi niya, there are only two countries that requires outdoor na may mask, it's just the Philippines and Myanmar. Ngayon, huwag na lang nating pag-usapan iyon 'no, tingnan na lang natin. Iyon kasing fear na baka tumaas ang kaso or about they want to connect it to booster – ayaw ko lang banggitin iyong bansa – pero may isang bansa diyan o ilang bansa, mas mababa pa ang booster shots, kaysa sa Pilipinas 'no.

Okay. So ito iyong comparative analysis of mask mandate, pinapakita niya iyong COVID cases bago ma-lift at after lifting 'no, tumaas ba ang kaso o hindi; ito iyong pinapakita ha, during our ano. So, kung makikita ninyo sa table na ito, lumalabas na talagang hindi naman ganoon kalaki ang deperensiya 'no, iyong kasong tumaas. Ang importante lang ay sundin natin ang protocols na minumungkahi ngayon ng IATF na basta sa labas at may hangin, puwede nang walang mask, pero make sure na iyong mga immunocompromised, iyong mga senior citizen, mga

bata, pag-ingatan pa rin natin, pag-mask pa rin natin. Although this is optional, it's up to us; dapat we should also have that responsibility.

Ngayon, moving forward sabi nga ni Usec. Vergeire, marami pang mangyayari dito, dahil iyon namang susunod, iyong mga sa indoor na pilot natin, please lang nanawagan ako sa lahat ng mayor, ng governor, magtulungan tayo about this booster 'no. Mag-booster shots pa rin tayo, because susunod na stage naman is about the indoor. Damihan na natin ito, para mas maginhawa sa ating lahat. Maraming salamat po!

VINCE LOPEZ: Good afternoon po. This question is for Secretary Abalos. Sir, good afternoon po. Ano po ang magiging parte ng DILG sa nasabing proposal na policy upang ma-monitor ang mga lugar na mababa pa rin ang vaccination turnout rate sa ating bansa?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Nag-usap na kami kanina ni Usec. Vergeire. Talagang this time around, talagang magiging very, very active ang DILG 'no, in fact, if kailangan samahan ko siya hanggang sa dulo, hanggang sa iba't ibang lugar, hanggang sa ibang islands natin, sasamahan ko siya. Pag-uusapan namin iyong kahalagahan ng booster shot, kasi kung minsan binabalewala na lang natin eh. Hindi porke—of course, Omicron is different from Delta, it's different from South African variant. Pero tandaan po natin ha, iba-iba ang katawan natin, at iyong mga immunocompromised o iyong mga nakakatanda, talagang importante po talaga itong booster na ito 'no. So, talagang ito ay iigtingan pa po namin ito ng husto!

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Kay Usec. Vergeire po. Ma'am, I just want to clarify kung iyong recommendation ng IATF to make mask wearing voluntary, kasama po iyong public transportation doon?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Well, when we talk about public transportation, Pia, we talk about a crowded place. So, it's about a crowded setting. So, kapag nakita natin iyan, hindi natin dapat isama, nonetheless, kasi kapag tiningnan din natin, parang indoor din siya, especially LRT, MRT. So siguro po, iyan po ay magiging exempted from that voluntary nature, because we expect that transport areas or iyong mga sinasakyan nating pampubliko ay laging siksikan.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: So, can we clarify po, what we mean by outdoors, para sure po iyong public, Ma'am?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Well, the outdoors would always be those places which are open, katulad po noong mga parke, katulad po noong mga pinupuntahan natin. Halimbawa naglalakad tayo sa daan, wala naman tayong masyadong katabi – these are outdoors and these are well ventilated, walang masyadong tao. Ang kailangan nating tingnan, iyong outdoor place where mayroong crowding, maraming tao at saka pangit ang bentilasyon; minsan may outdoor, tapos puno ng tao, tapos mayroon pa siyang structure, although bukas naman sa side, hindi iyon well-ventilated kapag ganoon.

So, it will up to the local government to determine also – we will release these guidelines – *alam nila kung ano po iyong dapat na hindi crowded at saka well-ventilated dapat iyong mga tao, magsusuot ng mask [sic].* Katulad ng sabi ko, Pia kanina, lahat ng ito ay babalik din sa behavior natin. We all need to help each other na alam po natin what should be the good practice of determining whether we wear our mask or we don't wear our mask.

MARK SALAZAR/GMA: Magandang hapon po, mayroon po ba kayong parang special clarification or guidelines sa mga school administrators kung paano ito i-interpret iyong changes na ito in campus dahil iyong mga bata ay istrikto tayo na kapag pumasok ng gate ng school ay should always be wearing their mask all the time. Baka may mga tagubilin kayong bago on how to interpret this new policy?

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Yes, sir. So, unang-una po, when we looked at the vulnerable sectors in society, we include children as part of those vulnerable. But katulad nga ng sabi natin, ang nakalagay sa resolusyon natin ay mga immunocompromised individuals at saka iyong atin pong mga nakakatanda.

So, I suggest that our parents na lang, be more careful and for them to ensure that their children are protected especially when they go to school where there are a lot of students interacting between and among each other. Mas maganda po siguro na hikayatin pa rin natin ang ating mga magulang, since this is voluntary na lagyan pa rin ng mask ang mga bata hanggang makatapos ng kanilang session for school. And then, when they go home, pag-outdoor puwede namang wala para nakakalaro rin nang maayos ang mga bata.

JOB MANAHAN: Good afternoon po, USec. Vergeire. Other topics naman, aside doon sa face mask. Iyong state of calamity due to COVID-19 is going to lapse na po on September 12, this is different from the State of Public Health Emergency Declaration po. May naibilin po ba si President Marcos regarding this? The Palace said kasi last month na it is up to your recommendation daw po whether to lift or to keep.

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Yes, Job. Actually, the President has already pronounced this during one of his interviews, when he had his vaccination in the City of Manila. He said that he is also parang agreeing that the state of calamity should be extended until the end of the year.

Ang kaniyang basehan was, because the considerations, sinasabi natin na mga tinitingnan natin na maapektuhan kapag nag-lapse ang state of calamity, iyong EUA na gamit natin, iyong COVID-19 vaccine deployment program, iyong mga tax exemptions and all of those.

Sabi niya, bago natin mairebisa ang RA 11525, so that we can have this cover kung sakaling mag-lapse, matatagalan pa. We cannot have this one month, para magawa natin iyon. So, sabi niya, he recommends na siguro dapat i-extend na lang hanggang matapos ang taon.

So, what we did after that pronouncement, we recommended to the National Disaster Risk Reduction and Management Council kasi sila iyong nagrerekomenda sa Presidente about state of calamities.

So we recommended, and a full council meeting be held last Monday wherein they already resolved that the recommendations will be submitted already to the President.

JOB MANAHAN: For Secretary Abalos naman po. Sir, 'Ber' months na rin po kasi and iyon malaki po iyong chance na iyong mobility ng mga tao, parang dadami rin po sila sa mga ano pamilihan. Ano po iyong magiging policies na iri-recommend ninyo for LGUs regarding the possible crowding sa mga areas, iyong mga hotspots like sa Divisoria, mga ganoong areas po, sir, at saka sa mall?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, hindi talaga kami titigil in reminding everyone. Although we have this new policy that's coming for outdoors, maski optional na nga ang mask, pero always maintain distance, hand washing, etc. Nandoon pa rin iyon and especially kaya nga ang nakalagay doon sa ginawa naming resolution is to remind everyone, especially those who are very, very vulnerable to this to be reminded that they should always take care of themselves by still wearing mask although it's optional 'no. That's the most that we could do right now and probably just prepare for the booster. That's the most important thing right now that we could really contribute to the LGUs.

Kaya nga by probably tingnan natin Usec. Vergeire if we could go around the country and really rally people behind this drive for booster shots, this is quite important right now.

Thank you.

EVELYN QUIROZ/PILIPINO MIRROR: Another topic lang po for Secretary Abalos. Sir, puwede pong malaman kung ano po iyong policy ng DILG sa STL operations? Kasi po may mga na-receive akong report na mayroon pong mga lalawigan na ang nag-o-operate po ay iyong illegal and not iyong binigyan po ng license ng PCSO. Ano po iyong policy ng DILG?

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Well, STL are given franchises by the PCSO so, kami ang susundin namin ay kung ano iyong binigyan ng franchises because these are the legal entities. Lahat ng illegal dapat lamang hulihin. And if you know of anyone na mayroong ganoon, sabihin ninyo lang sa ating PNP at ipapahuli po natin kaagad because those are illegal activities.

Thank you.

ASEC. DE VERA: Okay, thank you. Before we continue with Press Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles, may we ask for a closing statement from our guests. Start with Usec. Vergeire.

DOH-OIC DR. VERGEIRE: Yes. Gusto lang ho namin magpasalamat uli dito po sa binigay sa ating pagkakataon para maipaliwanag itong latest IATF resolution. Gusto lang din namin

magpaalala sa ating mga kababayan, bagama't mayroon ho tayong ganitong polisiya na liberalized use of mask, unang-una, kailangan nating maintindihan this is optional, this is voluntary.

Kailangan lahat tayo ay alam natin to assess our risk. Kailangan lahat tayo naiintindihan natin kung kailangan nating mag-mask sa isang lugar o hindi. At ang atin pong mga pamantayan para masabi kung kailangan mag-mask – kailangan hindi po matao ang lugar, it's not crowded, kailangan may maayos na daloy ng hangin at kailangan ang ating mga nakakatanda, ang ating mga immunocompromised individuals, iyong mga taong may sintomas kahit po hindi crowded ang pinuntahan ninyo, kailangan ninyo pong mag-mask.

Another reminder coming from the DOH, ang atin pong mga magulang na nagdadala o pinapayagan ang ating mga kabataan na pumunta sa eskuwela sana po ay bigyan natin ng extra protection lalo na kapag nasa loob po ng eskuwelahan makapagsuot ng mask ang ating mga kabataan. Kapag labas naman po at hindi na crowded, maayos ang daloy ng hangin ay maaari nang tanggalin kung talagang gusto ng ating mga magulang.

Lagi po nating tatandaan ang atin pong mga layers of protection ay hindi lang po isa o dalawa, anim po iyan – hand washing, physical distancing, wearing of the mask, vaccination, there is no crowding and also iyon pong ating good ventilation. Kapag nakuha natin lahat iyang six out of six, we have adequate protection.

Ngayon na nagkakaroon tayo ng liberalized policy on mask use kailangan ay magpabakuna tayo para the safeguard will be there. So, what we are saying right now, we have confidence in our vaccines that's why we are liberalizing the use of mask, iyong optional po ang paggamit ng mask sa low-risk settings at saka sa low-risk individuals.

Hindi po magsasawa ang Department of Health para magpaalala sa ating mga kababayan araw-araw sa pagpapatupad po ng ating minimum public health standards at saka po sa ating pagbabakuna.

Maraming salamat po.

DILG SEC. ABALOS: Mahaba na ho ang pinagdaanan natin magmula noong unang sumipot itong COVID. Nandiyan po ang South African variant, nandiyan ang UK variant, at ang pinaka-deadly sa lahat ang Delta variant. Lahat po iyan ay nalagpasan po natin, IATF po ang kasama po natin dito na siyang nagsasabi ng polisiya kung ano ang ating gagawin. Sinunod po natin ito, ang ating Pangulo ay sinunod natin. Kaya nandirito po tayo ngayon halos itong pandemic ay pa-endemic stage na, patapos na po ito. Sabi nga nila, ang COVID ay nag-iiba ng anyo. This is learning how to live with COVID. Nag-a-adjust na po tayo kaya nga iyon lang dapat din maging responsable tayo 'no, iyon naman ang hinihingi namin and part of this tulungan ninyo po kami.

Dati nagpapasalamat kami sa laking tulong ninyo sa amin pero lalo kaming humingi ng tulong ngayon for the booster and this will be a good day for tomorrow especially for our children, for our future.

Sa inyo pong lahat muli, maraming, maraming salamat.

ASEC. DE VERA: Maraming salamat Secretary Abalos and Undersecretary Vergeire. Ngayon naman ay makakasama natin uli si Press Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Magandang hapon. Nandito lang po ako kung mayroon po kayong katanungan.

ASEC. DE VERA: Any questions for Press Secretary Angeles?

JOB MANAHAN: Good afternoon, Secretary Trixie, kumusta po kayo diyan?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Inaantok na. Busy. Bising-busy po. Ang daming activities ng ating Pangulo pero at the same time marami pong, maraming pasalubong. So, hinihintay ko na lang iyong para dito sa Singapore.

JOB MANAHAN: Okay. Iyong regarding po sa health workers na sinabi po ni DMW Secretary Toots Ople last night, ilan po kaya iyong tinitingnan na health workers na maha-hire sa Singapore and she also mentioned iyong sa aviation services personnel. Iyon po. Ilan po kaya itong maha-hire?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Wala po siyang binanggit kasi na amount although iyon nga binabanggit niya various sectors including iyong sa social media, if I'm not mistaken, I think it's Facebook or Google na magha-hire ng Filipino techs tapos and then healthcare workers, and sa aviation and all that. What she is saying is that there is a significant number that the Singaporean authorities would like to open up for Filipinos.

Nagkaroon ng special emphasis iyong ating mga health workers dahil sa tulong nila nitong pandemya. So, but kapag nakuha natin iyong numbers, we've asked Secretary Ople to [unclear] them like what we did with Sec. Pascual. So, hintayin po natin.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Sec. Trixie, magandang hapon po. Ma'am, iyong sa recommendation lang po ng IATF, napaabot na po ba ito kay Pangulong Marcos Jr.? And how receptive is he with the recommendation po to make mask wearing in outdoor spaces voluntary?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, let's just say that he is optimistic for now. Mas mabuti kasi iyong nanggagaling sa kaniya but right now we think that the reception is optimistic. I would just like to remind everybody na dalawa po iyong interes na binabalanse ng ating Pangulo dito. May mga studies na nagpiprisinta ng direct correlation between the removal of mask,

mandatory mask mandate at saka iyong pagtaas ng turismo doon sa mga bayan. So, on the other hand, hindi rin tayo basta-basta maaaring magbago ng ating health protocols nang wala tayong backup plan, and the backup plan really here is to make sure that people are also boostered. So, mayroon tayong… ang balancing natin dito is the economy and public health.

So, let's give the President some time to consider these two interests and we will articulate his policy as soon as an approval or disapproval or modification of the proposed policy comes out.

PIA GUTIERREZ/ABS-CBN: Thank you very much, ma'am.

MARK SALAZAR/GMA: Secretary Trixie, Mark Salazar po sa GMA-7. Another topic po uli. As the iyong devaluation of peso po kasi continues tapos you still have Ukraine and Russia. Itong IBON Foundation po is proposing that government parang at certain level regulate daw po iyong pricing ng oil sa pump not similar to OPSF na ganoong subsidy pero parang iyong medium-term lang po na parang lagyan ng cap iyong patong ng oil companies per liter. What do you think of that proposal po, Secretary?

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Well, we will not issue an opinion on that one, what we will do is we will wait for the NEDA who is our economic policy maker, and the Department of Energy if ever they should issue either a comment or if they will issue policy on this one. Right now, there is no existent one in response to that question or to that proposal, sorry.

MARK SALAZAR/GMA: Thank you po.

ASEC. DE VERA: Any more questions from MPC? If none, Secretary Trixie.

SEC. CRUZ-ANGELES: Okay. Maraming, maraming salamat po, Malacañang Press Corps. Nami-miss ko na kayo. We will see when we get back. Thank you.

ASEC. DE VERA: Maraming salamat, Malacañang Press Corps, Secretary Trixie Cruz-Angeles, Secretary Benhur Abalos and DOH-OIC Undersecretary Rosario Vergeire. Magandang hapon.

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