



## PRESS RELEASE

### EU-ASEAN BUSINESS COUNCIL PUBLISHES PAPER ON PROMOTING SELF-CARE IN ASEAN TO IMPROVE HEALTH & WELLBEING OF CITIZENS IN SOUTHEAST ASIA

**Singapore – 17<sup>th</sup> November 2020:** Today the EU-ASEAN Business Council, the sole voice for European businesses spanning all of the ASEAN region, published its latest advocacy paper entitled “*Learnings from COVID-19: An Opportunity for ASEAN Governments to Establish Self-Care Policy to Improve the Health & Well-Being of their Populations*”. In the light of the COVID-19 pandemic, and the overstretching of primary care facilities that the pandemic has caused in many countries, the paper argues the case for a more focussed policy attention from the authorities in ASEAN on self-care, including broadening the availability of over-the-counter and self-care medicines for common or minor ailments.

Key points and recommendations from the paper include:

- ASEAN Governments should effectively build self-care policies and promotion into their national health policies;
- ASEAN to mandate the Pharmaceutical Products Working Group (PPWG) to be an ASEAN-wide regulatory enabler focused on streamlining self-care medicine regulation such as developing an ASEAN-wide, harmonised definition on self-care medicine;
- Alter educational curricula to include more widespread teaching of healthy living, including better nutrition, exercise, health monitoring, and self-care/remedy practices
- Increased engagement with the private sector around a number of initiatives to promote better self-care and increase availability of over-the-counter medicines
- In a survey of consumer attitudes in ASEAN towards self-care and availability of medicines for minor ailments it was found that:
  - 83% of respondents believe that medication for minor ailments should be available more widely, such as in supermarkets/mini-markets/ convenience shops;
  - 86% say governments should do more to incentivise and support people to self-care at home; and,
  - 65% are more likely to practice self-care at home without the consultation of healthcare professional as a result of COVID-19.

Speaking at the publication of the paper, Chris Humphrey, Executive Director of the EU-ABC said: “At the time of a global pandemic and health crisis, it is clear from the Survey that we undertook for the report that consumers in ASEAN would prefer to self-medicate at home and seek advice from e-Pharmacies. Moving to allow for more medicines to be available over-the-counter or through e-Pharmacies will help promote increased self-care in the region, and lead to savings in time and cost for healthcare systems that are already often overstretched”.

Ata Safdar, Senior Vice President of RB ASEAN said “In the relentless pursuit of a cleaner, healthier world, RB, as the maker of self-care medicines & personal hygiene products has been deeply committed to deliver innovative and easily accessible self-care solutions for consumers in ASEAN. In line with our commitment, we gladly participated in this ASEAN consumer study to learn more about their self-care needs, their preferred solutions, and how they should be delivered. Most already take self-care practices as part of their New Normal to achieve long and healthy lives, and they call upon government support to make this health policy happen, such as more Over-The-Counter

medicines, more e-commerce channels for healthcare, approval of communication on Covid-19 efficacy of hygiene products. This will not just benefit consumers but can also lead to significant savings on health budgets across the region. As a socially responsible corporate citizen, working in partnership with EU-ASEAN & ASEAN members' governments, we will strive to support the development of self-care policy in the region, and continue delivering the highest quality self-care solutions to consumers"

Speaking further about the need for more self-care in ASEAN, Alvin Brian So, Region head Bayer Consumer Health ASEAN said: "Even before the pandemic, we've seen how access to self-care solutions strengthens the ability of individuals and communities to maintain health and prevent disease. With COVID-19 movement restrictions, e-commerce accessibility to self-care medicines has also become critically important for people to stay healthy while sheltering safe at home. Survey results in Indonesia, Malaysia, Thailand and Vietnam show strong consumer needs for increasing self-care availability and e-pharmacy accessibility of self-care solutions. We look forward to more public-private collaborations to enable consumer access to good quality self-care medicines for minor illnesses and drive a robust self-care framework advancing the United Nations' Sustainable Development Goal #3 of Health and Wellness in ASEAN."

The need for better and more sustainable healthcare in ASEAN will be subject of a discussion panel at the 8<sup>th</sup> ASEAN-EU Business Summit in Singapore on 19 November. See [www.asean-eu-summit.org](http://www.asean-eu-summit.org) for more information.

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## **About the EU-ASEAN Business Council**

The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) is the primary and sole voice for European business covering all of the ASEAN region.

It is recognised by the European Commission and the ASEAN Secretariat and is an accredited entity under Annex 2 of the ASEAN Charter. Independent of both bodies, the Council has been established to help promote the interests of European businesses operating within ASEAN and to advocate for changes in policies and regulations which would help promote trade and investment between Europe and the ASEAN region. The Council works on a sectorial and cross-industry basis to help improve the investment and trading conditions for European Businesses in the ASEAN region through influencing policy and decision makers throughout the region and in the EU, as well as acting as a platform for the exchange of information and ideas amongst its members and regional players within the ASEAN region.

The EU-ABC's membership consists of large European Multi-National Corporations and the nine European Chambers of Commerce from around Southeast Asia. The EU-ABC represents a diverse range of European industries cutting across almost every commercial sphere from car manufacturing through to financial services and including Fast Moving Consumer Goods and high-end electronics and communications. Our members all have a common interest in enhancing trade, commerce and investment between Europe and ASEAN.

The Executive Director of the EU-ASEAN Business Council is Mr Chris Humphrey, and its Chairman is Mr Donald Kanak. The Council is led by an elected Board consisting of corporate leaders representing a range of important industry sectors and representatives of the European Chambers of Commerce.

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