

EU-ASEAN BUSINESS COUNCIL ADVOCATES FOR THE CONTINUED ADOPTION OF DIAGNOSTICS ACROSS ASEAN TO STRENGTHEN HEALTHCARE SYSTEMS

Singapore – 25 August: The EU-ASEAN Business Council (EU-ABC) today published a report on *Transforming Diagnostic Access: A Roadmap for ASEAN*, laying out key recommendations for public and private stakeholders to consider undertaking to improve and further strengthen existing healthcare systems across ASEAN through the adoption of diagnostics. By building a strong and diverse diagnostics infrastructure, and putting in place national screening programmes, the early detection of diseases can improve not only the health outcomes for patients, but also alleviate the economic burden of treatment for individuals before medical conditions progress into advanced cases.

Despite its merits for the various stakeholders in the healthcare continuum, diagnostics has persistently been under-valued and side-lined. The global pandemic, however, has brought the limelight to diagnostics, giving it the prominence and recognition it deserves. As the World Health Organisation (WHO) have rightfully identified, diagnostics is the first line of defence against diseases. It reduces the possibility of re-emergence of eradicated diseases and helps to stop the further spread & escalation of many diseases. Strengthening the weakest link in the healthcare continuum – diagnostics – is therefore critical as it enables for early, rapid, and accurate detection of diseases that can save lives.

The report covers a study of six ASEAN member states and underscores the current state of diagnostics in each of these countries. The recommendations laid out in the report are targeted to drive the adoption of diagnostics and to advocate for the inclusion of screening as part of healthcare packages to ensure that testing and diagnostics remain affordable and accessible for all. By prioritising investment in testing, this will help ASEAN states transition to an endemic stage post-COVID-19 and equip its member-states for future pandemics that have yet to come, strengthening the resilience of their healthcare systems in the broader goal of Universal Health Coverage. The EU-ABC encourages all relevant stakeholders to continue harnessing on the momentum provided by COVID-19 and to further develop the infrastructure and good practices inherited by the pandemic. This will steer ASEAN closer to fulfilling its Post-2015 Health Development Agenda (APHDA) 2021 – 2025 vision of creating “a healthy, caring and sustainable ASEAN community”.

Sanjeev Johar, Divisional Vice President, Rapid Diagnostics (APAC), Abbott stated: “The COVID-19 pandemic has highlighted the critical role of point-of-care testing in public health management. Better integrated decentralised, community-based and laboratory testing settings are needed for a more resilient healthcare system. This is even more relevant for ASEAN countries, given the geographical and resource constraints, for a more equitable patient access to care.”

Lance Little, Managing Director of Roche Diagnostics Asia Pacific, also weighed in: “Perceptions about the value of diagnostics have shifted – with a majority of people believing testing helps in maintaining overall health. By ensuring that people get tested and diagnosed at the right time, health systems can effectively triage patients and redirect resources to where they are most needed.

While health expenditure per capita in ASEAN remains stagnant at around 4% of GDP, the demands on health systems will continue to increase. Enhancing diagnostics access starts by working closely with industry stakeholders and policymakers, supporting patients in their quest to live healthier lives, and ultimately benefiting society as a whole. Roche remains committed to forging strategic partnerships to improve diagnostics capacity in the region and supporting the growth and sustainability of healthcare systems in ASEAN and beyond.”



Chris Humphrey, Executive Chairman of the EU-ABC said: “The role that diagnostics play in delivering safe, affordable and better targeted healthcare to the citizens of ASEAN cannot be underestimated. COVID-19 demonstrated clearly the vital role that diagnostics can play in disease prevention and control. The time is now ripe to build on that impetus and give diagnostics the role and credit they deserve in our healthcare systems. Better and more diagnostics means catching diseases and illnesses earlier, improving the chances of recovery and less intrusive treatments, improving control, and ultimately lowering costs for health systems and patients alike.”

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 Martin Hayes. 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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