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RECOMMENDATIONS PRESENTED BY REPRESENTATIVES OF THE PRIVATE SECTOR

(Patricia Wu, Vice President and Managing Director of C&M International)

Good morning. I'm pleased to present you perspectives on behalf of both the ABD Health Working Group, which I chair, and the ABD Transparency & Regulatory Working Group, of which I am an active member.

On behalf of both groups, we congratulate the United States and SIRG members for developing excellent drafts.

We also applaud the United States and SIRG members for providing the opportunity for us to provide perspectives. We believe the opportunity to formally engage in the process makes the statements more relevant. And hope such opportunities for us to to formally engage will be institutionalized going forward.

Today we offer perspectives on three of the draft political commitments:

for an Action Plan on Health and Resilience;
for an Action Plan on Democratic Governance; and
for a Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation.

First, for the Action Plan on Health and Resilience...

we welcome development of an Action Plan that includes several key cooperative measures that we agree are critical: harmonization and convergence of regulations, strengthening the health workforce, sufficient financing, leveraging digital tools, and creating an enabling environment for the region to manufacture and trade safe, effective, and high-quality medical products. Thank you
...

However, we see need to further emphasize the need for our region to not continue "business as usual" but, rather, to seize this moment in time to transform our health economies to drive recovery and growth. Borrowing the words of Ambassador Philips-Spencer, this is not just about hospitals but the broader health economy – products such as manufacturing and distributing vaccines, medicines, medical devices, services such as telehealth, and cloud services and the cross-border data flows that enable them, and more. This pandemic has shown us that we MUST transform our health economies to be strategic economic and health assets for our hemisphere – to be drivers of jobs for our people and drivers of production and exports for our economies.

to that end, for the political commitment for an Action Plan on Health and Resilience, the ABD Health Working Group has ONE KEY RECOMMENDATION.

“That ministers and responsible authorities develop and implement the Action plan with input and participation from the private sector, civil society, and other social actors by establishing [Americas RISE for Health,] an annual multistakeholder forum, and with the support of the Organization of American States, the Pan American Health Organization, the Inter-American Development Bank, and other members of the Joint Summit Working Group, as appropriate.

As health ministries have told us, transforming health economies to drive recovery and growth is not their mandate. It is similarly not the mandate of PAHO. Responsibility for the health economy is one shared among trade/commerce/investment promotion ministries, digital ministries, finance ministries. Further, it requires the private sector and civil society. Finally, it is not an easy undertaking completed in one meeting. It requires us all joining forces year after year to get the hard work done – through dialogue yes but, more importantly, through FOLLOWING UP with the capacity building partnerships and detailed policy prescriptions. THIS REQUIRES THE MECHANISM OF AN ANNUAL MULTISTAKEHOLDER FORUM. ONE WHICH DOES NOT EXIST IN OUR HEMISPHERE.

We are delighted that our civil society partners agree. The Inter American Dialogue, the journal Lancet and others have also called for such a mechanism. We, as private sector and civil society are ready to partner with your governments through such a mechanism to transform our region’s health economies to drive recovery and growth. We hope in June in Los Angeles your Leaders will agree that this – of all moments – is the time for us to join forces to do so.

Let me move next to the Action Plan on Democratic Governance....

The ABD Transparency & Regulatory Working Group congratulates the United States on SIRG members on a very comprehensive draft.

Our comments focus on the Transparency and Anticorruption section.

Here, we applaud inclusion of a section on regulatory transparency – including commitments around developing regulations in an open and transparent manner, by implementing good regulatory practices, such as conducting public consultations.

Indeed, today’s inclusion of private sector and civil society in the SIRG is a terrific example of good regulatory practices, which we hope the SIRG continues.

For the health sector, perhaps the most heavily regulated sector on the planet, good regulatory practices is critical to ensuring not only the development – but also the procurement – of safe, effective, and high-quality medical -products.

However, one key element is missing from this draft political statement. And that is recognition that digitalization of key government processes is a uniquely efficient and scalable solution to address the root causes of corruption. Digitalization of government processes improves transparency and reduce opportunities for corruption, while providing an enabling environment for companies to make investments.

We therefore urge inclusion of commitments around digitalization of key government processes – for in particular the “big four” (licensing and permitting, procurement, tax and customs). This is another recommendation that we share with our civil society partners.

With respect to licensing and permitting in particular, the Declaration of Lima paragraph #32 called for fostering transparency in the issuance of government permits. Can implement this commitment already agreed to in 2018 by committing to DIGITALIZE the issuance of government permits? This will unlock backlogs of already approved, shovel-ready investment projects that just await issuance of permits to break ground.

This leads to our third and final perspective, which is on the draft political commitment for a Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation.

And that it should reflect commitment that I just discussed – digitalizing key government processes – including for an already agreed to commitment in Lima -- on the issuance of government permits.

To conclude:

for the political commitment for the Action Plan on Health and Resilience – we urge establishment of an annual multistakeholder forum to support development and implementation of the Action Plan

for the political commitment for an Action Plan on Democratic Governance and for a Regional Agenda for Digital Transformation – we urge recognition that digitalization of key government processes is a uniquely efficient and scalable solution to address the root causes of corruption. And we urge implementation of a 2018 commitment by committing to digitalize the issue of government permits

Thank you.