



MALACAÑAN PALACE
MANILA

Intervention of
PRESIDENT RODRIGO ROA DUTERTE
at the APEC Informal Leaders' Retreat
16 July 2021

QUOTES

More than a year into the pandemic, we have yet to fully contain COVID-19. Comprehensive recovery remains elusive. Our peoples continue to suffer.

We need bold, collaborative responses to get us back on the path of growth and prosperity.

The Philippines is concerned with the increasing North-South divide between the 'vaccine-haves' and 'have-nots'.

Notwithstanding our commitment to act together, we have somehow managed to turn this crisis into an unforgiving race to immunity.

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We are aware that more than 80 percent of COVID-19 vaccines have gone to rich countries, leaving the rest of us in the developing world with so little to get by. This great imbalance in vaccine access needs to be rectified. Vaccine nationalism must end.

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Countries can, of course, build fortresses and create 'travel bubbles' with one another. But these are not sustainable pathways to recovery.

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The Philippines reiterates its call for equitable access to safe and effective vaccines. Global economic recovery hinges on an efficient and effective mass inoculation worldwide.

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APEC economies must resist imposing barriers to the free flow of vaccines and related essential products. We must stabilize vaccine prices to the level that make them more affordable to developing countries.

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On a more strategic level, we need to democratize vaccine development and manufacturing. Let us explore the possibility of technology transfer and time-bound compulsory licensing to allow production in developing countries.

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We must act with resolve and urgency and hold ourselves accountable to our own public pronouncements and policies.

I say this in earnest: we must get our priorities straight. How can nations have stockpiles of weapons that can destroy us all but not have ready reserves of life-saving vaccines and medical supplies for sharing that can save us all?

Surely, it is wiser to invest in building paths to recovery rather than in roads to perdition.

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Beyond vaccines, economic recovery is also contingent on resilient global value chains and free movement of goods and peoples.

To advance this agenda, we must expedite the realization of the Free Trade Area of the Asia Pacific, drawing elements from the RCEP agreement and other regional arrangements.

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APEC must also take the initiative to facilitate international travel while safeguarding public health. It is about time that we consider arrangements on the use of internationally recognized digital vaccination certificates that are scientific, verifiable and non-discriminatory.

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COVID-19 will not be the last disruptive event that humanity will face. Yet, our global and domestic mechanisms remain inadequate to address systemic shocks of great magnitude.

It is our collective obligation to future-proof our region. We can do this by harnessing technology and innovation through enhanced multilateralism.

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.. we wish Japan's success in mounting the Tokyo Olympics and Paralympic Games. Delayed by a year, Tokyo 2020 has now become a symbol of global unity and a testament to humanity's boundless capacity to overcome odds.