

Hong Kong, 19 August 2021

**BY EMAIL**

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**The Honourable Ms Carrie Lam Cheng Yuet-ngor**

Chief Executive of the Hong Kong S.A.R.

Dear Chief Executive,

**Re: Open Letter to the Government of The Hong Kong S.A.R.**

The European business community was grateful for the recent attempt for relaxing the quarantine measures for travellers coming into Hong Kong. We believed that this was a major step in the right direction. However, the changes to the quarantine requirements announced on Monday 15<sup>th</sup> present a significant setback.

Those of us that had the opportunity to travel to Europe have been able to witness that most countries in that part of the world have moved onwards from the worst part of the pandemic crisis. While the number of infections is again growing in many countries, those countries that have accelerated their vaccination programs are seeing many less critical cases and deaths than last year. Vaccination programs in combination with intensive testing efforts as well as locally adapted Covid-19 measures are proving to be a balanced strategy to control the health and recover from the economic crisis. Airports are open and travel across Europe is resuming gradually, people vaccinated can in most cases travel for private and business to other destinations with no need for quarantine.

With new variants of the virus coming in, it looks very likely that the risk of infection will continue for an unforeseeable time. Vaccination programs will most likely need to consider additional doses and boosters to help the vaccinated population to adapt to the new variants and reduce the probability of extreme cases. This may become the new normal. Many countries have made plans to face the current crisis considering the above scenario, whereby the relevant populations live with the virus, which, similar to the seasonal flu, evolves and is not as lethal, also because the populations are increasingly vaccinated and are provided with boosters frequently. This allows for life to resume and for the economy to be able to re-open fully again.

We think that recent concerns raised by the Government's health advisors around isolated cases of residents returning to the city and testing positive after a few days of coming out of the quarantine are out of proportion and contribute again to concern within the international community. We are of the view that Hong Kong must open itself sooner rather than later or this new quarantine regime could lead many in the international community to question if they want to remain indefinitely trapped in Hong Kong when

the rest of the world is moving on. This concern amongst the international business community could pose, undoubtedly, a growing threat to Hong Kong's status as an international business centre.

We would therefore encourage the Hong Kong Government as a matter of urgency to consider the following actions:

- 1) Create and communicate a clear exit strategy to the pandemic which would take into account not only the local health concerns regarding Covid-19 but also the overall mental wellbeing of the entire population, particularly the most vulnerable groups such as children and the elderly. Formulating such an exit strategy would be the basis to restore confidence as well as enabling businesses (both local and international) to plan ahead;
- 2) continue to step up efforts on the vaccination of the remaining population; and
- 3) continue to relax all quarantine measures for vaccinated visitors as this will help to reactivate the international (as well as local) business in conjunction with intensive testing efforts.

Finally, the European Chamber of Commerce wishes to offer, once again, its help to the Hong Kong Government. As a business community and stakeholder in Hong Kong, we believe it is one of our duties to express our views and make suggestions to the Hong Kong Government with the target to help maintain the competitive edge for this unique city, which many of us also call their home.

Sincerely,

For and on behalf of The European Chamber of Commerce in Hong Kong



Frederik Gollob

Chairman of the Board of Directors

**CC:**

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