

SPEAKING NOTES

Event: Launch of the Structured Dialogue

Topic: Availability of Medicines and Medical Devices

Date: Friday, 26 February 2021 (2 min)

INTRODUCTION

Dear Vice-President Schinas,

Dear Commissioner Stella Kyriakides,

Dear Commissioner Breton,

Dear representatives of the European Parliament,

Dear representatives of pharmaceutical industry, healthcare professionals and patients' organisations,

Dear participants,

- I would like to start by thanking the European Commission for the preparation and launch of the Structured Dialogue Initiative, with view to bolstering the European health sector and addressing the vulnerabilities of the supply chain. Achieving strategic autonomy in this field is a very important goal pursued by the European Union and its Member-States.

INTERVENTION

- As you may be aware, the Portuguese Presidency elected as one of its priorities in the field of health the support for a sustainable, equitable and universal access to medicines and medical devices. With that in mind, such



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issues will be thoroughly discussed between national and European authorities, as well as stakeholders, at a Conference organized by the Presidency on 28 April 2021.

- In fact, issues focusing on the availability of medicines and medical devices are of particular relevance. Together with other Member-States, Portugal has argued in the recent past in favour of EU wide legislative and non-legislative measures in this area. It is more than time to act.
- Indeed, in light of the lessons learnt from the pandemic, there is a clear need to create a European Health Union and to reinforce the need for solidarity between Member States.
- The COVID-19 crisis has demonstrated that without a collective effort we will not succeed. This was noticeable during the most acute phase of the pandemic, during which Member-States faced significant difficulties concerning managing access to medicines and medical devices.
- In this context, initiatives to bolster the resilience of the pharmaceutical supply chain and ensure security of supply of medicines are crucial to meet the European public health needs.
- There can be no doubt: supply chains must be robust and resilient, in order to ensure an adequate, regular and continuous supply of the market, particularly in moments of crisis.
- It is therefore important to take every appropriate legal or policy action. However, we must first identify the causes and drivers of vulnerabilities and dependencies which are affecting supply chains. To that end, it is



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imperative that we endeavour all efforts to promote transparency and information sharing relating to all operators of supply chains.

- Furthermore, we need to examine the whole lifecycle of medicines - from raw materials to medicines available for purchase at European pharmacies - and try to combine, as much as possible, the perspectives of the various stakeholders.
- At the same time, we also need to maintain a balance between the need to devote more resources to bolster the resilience of our supply chains, with both the need to improve the sustainability of our health systems and the continuing need to finance innovation.
- In that light, the Structured Dialogue is a good opportunity for all actors of the pharmaceutical manufacturing sector, as well as public authorities, to engage in an inclusive and proactive discussion, with view to delivering a constructive analysis in support of adequate policy options.
- It should serve as a forum to allow us to gain a better understanding of the functioning of global pharmaceutical supply chains, as well as to identify potential causes and drivers of vulnerabilities and dependencies threatening the supply of medicines and medical devices.
- Finally, the implementation of the Structured Dialogue will allow us to put forward policy options to reinforce the continuity and security of supply of medicines and medical devices in the EU.



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CONCLUSION

- To conclude, I wish this to be the start of a fruitful engagement between the pharmaceutical sector and authorities, aiming at delivering concrete results to make Europe stronger and less vulnerable. I also wish for this forum to deliver a constructive analysis in support of adequate policy options to enforce the continuity and security of the supply of medicinal products in the EU.
- Thank you very much for your time.