

H.E. Tamila Barkalaya
Deputy Minister of Health, Labour and Social Affairs

C.C.
H.E Giorgi Gakharia, Prime Minister of Georgia
H.E. Ekaterine Tikaradze, Minister of Health, Labour and Social Affairs
Honorable members of the Investors Council

Tbilisi, May 23, 2020

Dear Deputy Minister Barkalaya,

Re: Health regulations for businesses

Greetings from the International Chamber of Commerce, we would like to thank you for your detailed brief at the meeting with the Investors Council members on May 22, 2020.

We would also like to share with you our views regarding the regulations that your Ministry is preparing for businesses regarding COVID-19.

Firstly, compelling businesses to keep a “daily journal of infection” in which they should record the numbers of times they have disinfected their working space every day, is an idea reminiscent from the Soviet Union and an open door for corruption; businesses can write anything they wish in such a journal, and there is no way that health authorities could control the correctness of what could be written, it is therefore a waste of time and energy and a typical useless bureaucratic hurdle.

Secondly, compelling businesses to take the temperature of their employees every morning is useless, considering that asymptomatic carriers of COVID-19 don’t have high temperature, by the same token many symptomatic carriers don’t have high temperature either.

Thirdly, penalizing businesses for not following the many regulations that the government is planning to impose is surely not what businesses expect from government after the economic disaster created by the coronavirus crisis, and especially that many of those regulations are subject to freedom of interpretation.

Businesses expect financial support from government, and surely not additional penalties and financial strain. We are well aware of the very limited financial capacity of government and its inability to help businesses at the level required by the crisis, but we surely don’t expect government to create additional hurdles to already struggling enterprises.

The International Chamber of Commerce cannot support nor endorse policed regulations for businesses; we expect government to be a partner in those difficult times and surely not an oppressor.

We expect government to issue recommendations and guidance to businesses to follow, and surely not regulations to be enforced by health inspectors with penalties in the tens of thousands of Lari.

Georgians have shown themselves during this crisis to be mature and responsible; they can follow recommendations and guidance without the need for a police force.

Government can't be more concerned about people's health than people themselves.

We expect health inspectors to visit businesses to teach them, educate them, advise them and lead them; we surely don't expect health inspectors to oppress, punish, pressure and penalize businesses that are emerging from a cataclysmic crisis of biblical magnitude.

Based on the above we kindly ask you to review your approach and policies, and to transform your regulations into recommendations, in a spirit of understanding, solidarity and responsibility towards a sector that was destroyed during the past three months.

Sincerely,

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Chairman of the Board

