

January 12, 2022

To: His Excellency General Prayuth Chan-o-cha
Prime Minister of the Kingdom of Thailand
Government House
1 Pitsanuloke Road, Dusit, Bangkok 10300

Dear General Prayuth,

Subject: Embracing International Tourism while still Curbing COVID

Once again, I commend you and your administration on its adroit handling of COVID-19 pandemic. Thailand is fortunate that our nation's healthcare system (with government guidance) has truly stepped up and delivered exemplary care that even richer countries would envy. I particularly want to endorse the administration's judicious balancing of public health and economic well-being.

Unfortunately, we now find ourselves facing the Omicron variant. Despite its speed of transmission, evidence has emerged that the Omicron variant produces milder symptoms and is less severe than previous severe strains. Hospitalization and fatality rates are proportionally lower, especially among the vaccinated. Some epidemiologists believe that Omicron will actually hasten the virus' transition from pandemic to endemic. Death rates are less than motorcycle accidents and flu death. In other words, it might be more of a solution than a problem. Still, in the near term, infection rates will not come down. Therefore, how we handle the situation must be different. Slowing of the virus' spread can be achieved through a combination of vaccinations/boosters, and continued advisories for social distancing and mask wearing. But per the opinion of the Thai Chamber of Commerce, Thai Hotels Association and the World Health Organization, further lockdowns are not the answer. Lockdowns will only harm livelihoods and prolong economic disruption. I also urge the government to remove the restrictions on alcohol serving hours for SHA Plus certified restaurants. We can encourage responsible consumption of alcohol while at the same time ensuring compliance with COVID-19 protocols. This will certainly have a beneficial impact on tourism.

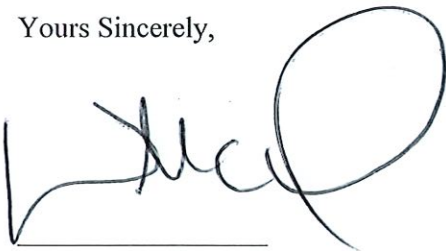
In regards to foreign tourists entering the country, I believe a more pragmatic approach should be considered here too. Experience has taught us that border entry restrictions may cause more harm than good, particularly when domestic transmission of Omicron has already taken root. The World Health

Organization deems border closures both arbitrary and ineffective, and it was for these same reasons that the United Kingdom quickly rescinded border closures following the appearance of Omicron. Many European countries, the US and the Middle East have relaxed travel restrictions. Thailand should follow suit and resume pre-pandemic entry rules.

Moreover, the Thailand Pass pre-approval system has outlived its usefulness, having served as more of a hindrance to visitors than a public health safeguard even insurance and pre-booking of hotels is a hindrance as proven by the rest of the world. This is not required today. In its stead, I suggest pre-departure proof of vaccination and RT-PCR testing, as required by most nations and airlines. The resumption of Test & Go or Sandbox programs is preferable. Any guest arriving and testing positive can be self-quarantined in their hotel. In regards to tourism sandbox programs, the expansion of destinations to include Surat Thani islands, Krabi, and Phangnga was a good step in the right direction, but further roll out into more provinces would be even better.

We in the business community are eager to work alongside your government and support efforts to weather this new COVID-19 wave. I am confident that with a balanced approach we can keep our businesses open and economy humming, while at the same time finding a way to live with this virus. I thank you in advance for your consideration on this important matter. Should you have any questions or concerns, I look forward to the opportunity to discuss them with you in greater detail.

Yours Sincerely,



William E. Heinecke

Chairman

Minor International PCL.

CC: His Excellency Mr. Anutin Charnvirakul
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Public Health

His Excellency Mr. Don Pramudwinai
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs

His Excellency Mr. Supattanapong Punmeechaow
Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Energy

His Excellency Mr. Phiphat Ratchakitprakarn
Minister of Tourism and Sports

General Suphot Malaniyom
Secretary - General of National Security Council

Mr. Yuthasak Supasorn
Governor of Tourism Authority of Thailand

Mr. Kalin Sarasin
Senior Chairman of The Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand

Mr. Sanan Angubolkul
Chairman of The Thai Chamber of Commerce and Board of Trade of Thailand

Mrs. Marisa Sukosol Nunbhakdi
President of Thai Hotels Association

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