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IATF ADOPTS COVID-19 VACCINATION PRIORITY FRAMEWORK AMID LIMITED VACCINE SUPPLY

Press Release | 6 February 2021

Given the limited global supply of vaccines for COVID-19, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Diseases (IATF) has adopted the prioritization framework and criteria of the Interim National Immunization Technical Advisory Group (NITAG) in allocating first tranches of vaccines against COVID-19 that will arrive in the country.

“Of course, our goal with the vaccination is to vaccinate every Filipino as directed by the President. However, we recognize that we are working under the context of limited global supply of the COVID-19 vaccine, which is why the IATF has resolved to adopt this prioritization framework to ensure that those who have the highest risk of exposure and death will be protected from the disease,” Health Secretary Francisco T. Duque III said.

With aims of reducing COVID-19 morbidity and mortality, preserving health system capacity, protecting the populations most at-risk to the disease, slowing down COVID-19 transmission rate, and minimizing social and economic disruptions, the resolution prioritizes frontline workers in the national and local health facilities. The framework further lists vulnerable groups—like senior citizens and those with comorbidities—as the next priority for vaccination, and provides for sub-prioritization based on risk exposure or mortality risk and the process flow that citizens will undergo in the vaccination program.

The IATF resolution, however, also provides that exclusion criteria for each vaccine (i.e. possible contraindications such as severe allergic reactions) shall be considered in the vaccination of the priority populations. “We are not excluding senior citizens and those with comorbidities including the immunodeficient. In fact, they are included among the priority groups to be vaccinated. However, due to their risk, they must first be clinically assessed before getting vaccinated,” Health Secretary Francisco Duque III said.

“With the forthcoming vaccines from COVAX, we have to be strategic in distributing the limited supply of vaccines to ensure that we will maximize our resources and minimize potential losses. *At inaayos po natin lahat, with the vaccine cluster, para harmonized ang kilos ng national at ng local implementing units natin pagdating ng mga bakuna,*” Sec. Duque added.

The Health Secretary also encouraged the priority groups to get the earliest available vaccines. “Any amount of protection is better than cure, and we assure everyone that the vaccines that the government will roll out are safe and effective. So we encourage those in our frontlines and the most vulnerable groups to get vaccinated when presented with the opportunity under the immunization program. Vaccines work and have saved millions of lives,” Sec. Duque urged.