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Brussels, 28 April 2021

Ms. Ursula von der Leyen
President
European Commission
Rue de la Loi
1049 Brussels

Dear Ms. von der Leyen,

EU's support to India's Coronavirus crisis

On behalf of the Europe India Chamber of Commerce; the Apex Chamber in Europe which promotes trade and economic relations between European Union and India, I want to thank you for the swift action that has been taken under your leadership for activating the EU Civil Protection Mechanism and mobilizing urgently needed critical medical supplies, and other assistance to India to help overcome the health crisis in the wake of the rise in COVID-19 pandemic infection rates.

For the past few weeks, in the second wave, India has been experiencing the worst phase of the pandemic with the number of daily COVID-19 infections setting new records every single day, leading to an unprecedented shortage of all round healthcare in the country as hospitals have been filled to the brim and indeed overflowing, extreme shortage of vital drugs and inadequate supply of oxygen that has led to many deaths in various parts of the country as the health infrastructure has been stretched beyond its limits. With the coronavirus crisis deepening, never has been the scale of humanitarian need in India been greater and we therefore appreciate very much the support the EU is providing.

It is true that the catastrophe unfolding in India appears to be the worst-case scenario that not many had ever imagined or even feared, but we are confident that the country of 1.4 billion has the resilience not to allow itself sink beneath the weight of infections and its catastrophic economic effects.

We hope that the situation will soon be brought under control, but as we have learned over the course of this pandemic, hope is not enough, and we need more international cooperation to defeat this pandemic in India and everywhere.

India is now the epicenter of the global pandemic and the world is seeing a clearer picture of exactly how seriously Covid-19 is ravaging India. The deluge of infections has led to a severe health crisis in the country with Indian Prime Minister Mr. Modi saying recently that the second wave has hit India "like a storm".

We are of the strong view that there is an urgent need for building institutional capacity to address the Covid-19 situation in India. Both EU and India have several globally renowned epidemiologists and virologists and we would suggest building a body of experts consisting of

top-class scientists and experts who could enhance the knowledge capacity in understanding the pattern of the virus spread and take early preventive steps.

While dealing with the pandemic is the sole priority of India right now, but this catastrophic tsunami has once again highlighted the need and perhaps provided the opportunity for a deeper cooperation between EU and India in the broad healthcare sector which has had disparate features in the past.

While both the sides have fairly close cooperation in a few areas like joint medical research or institution to institution cooperation, perhaps it is time now to increase this horizontally and vertically. This includes pharmaceutical capacity building in both territories. In the past there have been several occasions when Indian pharma exports even to third nations have been blocked by the EU on patently frivolous reasons. As the supply of urgent medicines and other medical equipment, in both directions – first from India to EU and now from EU to India – shows the capacity and quality of industry on both sides to rise to the occasion. We believe that it is time to broaden this approach beyond emergencies and make it a regular feature and hence we request a better and equal treatment for Indian pharmaceutical companies and their products in the EU. This could propel the bilateral trade and investment ties to new highs and also perhaps bring the two sides closer to an agreement on the much-awaited BTIA.

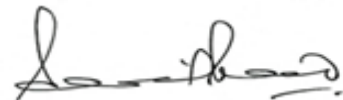
The upcoming EU-India Summit on 8 May 2021 offers leaders of EU and India the opportunities not only to discuss the present crisis but also how such crisis can be avoided in future.

Once again, we thank you for your leadership in these difficult and uncertain times, and for standing in full solidarity with the Indian people. In particular, we wish to express our gratitude for the support Member States of the EU are providing to India.

In the spirit of the above, we would also like to state that the success of the EU India relations cannot be measured in terms of miles or any map but in terms of the shared values of the strategic partnership, and concern for each other. The EU's swift action reflects this spirit and we hope that both EU and India will continue to further their relations.

With kind regards,

Yours sincerely,



Secretary General