



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

PRESS RELEASE

REQUEST FOR INFORMATION ON IMPORT AND DISTRIBUTION OF PERSONAL PROTECTIVE EQUIPMENT

Nairobi, Kenya- 23rd April 2020: 17 Kenyans and 19 organizations have written to the Pharmacy and Poisons Board requesting information on importation and distribution of personal protective equipment (PPE) during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The request for information is made in the spirit of ensuring transparency and accountability in procurement and distribution of life-saving medicines and other medical supplies. Further, the request for information seeks to establish how the Pharmacy and Poisons Board is protecting Kenyans against price gouging of drugs and other goods and services required to protect citizens and health workers from COVID-19 infections.

Erick Okioma, a community health champion, who is among the individuals requesting for the information has noted that: *“As we deal with COVID-19 pandemic, Kenyans must remain vigilant to ensure that procurement, importation and distribution of important medical supplies that are urgently needed is not taken over by tenderpreneurs and corrupt cartels. It is a fact that corrupt cartels exist and if we are not transparent in how we handle these processes then they will take over, hence putting the community and health care workers at risk.”*

The request, therefore, asks the Pharmacy and Poisons Board to provide the following information in compliance with Article 35 of the Constitution of Kenya and section 4 and 9(2) of the Access to Information Act, 2016:

- (i) Which distributors have been licensed to import PPE?
- (ii) What are the procedures or processes of seeking the import license?
- (iii) How long does the process take?
- (iv) How much does it cost to get the license?
- (v) Which department of the board is responsible for the issuance of the license?

- (vi) From which countries are the PPEs being imported from? And what are the main ports of entry?
- (vii) How many local suppliers and manufacturers are involved in the process?
- (viii) What are the procedures or processes of certifying local manufacturers of PPEs? And is this done in collaboration with KEBS?
- (ix) How has the Pharmacy and Poisons Board adjusted its processes to support accelerated importation and distribution of PPE?
- (x) Is there a report produced by the board that shows efforts of the PPB so far in ensuring regulatory measures are upheld to achieve the highest standards of safety, efficacy, and quality of PPEs locally manufactured or imported? Where can this information be obtained?
- (xi) Has the board developed an appropriate system for detecting, reporting, and monitoring adverse effects or reactions of imported/ local PPEs to users in Kenya?

In conclusion, Sheila Masinde of Transparency International Kenya noted that *“The COVID-19 pandemic has created an urgent need for medical devices, for instance, personal protective equipment. Due to this, there is a need to safeguard the pharmaceutical system from unethical and corrupt practices. Enhancing checks and balances in the importation and distribution processes is thus necessary to ensure a sound, effective, and transparent system for the procurement of quality products to fully protect health workers at the frontline of combatting the pandemic and Kenyans at large.”*

Note to the Editors

This statement was sent to: The Chief Executive Officer, Pharmacy & Poisons Board and copied to the National Chairman Kenya Medical Practitioners Pharmacist and Dentist Union, the Chairman, National Nurses Association of Kenya, the National Chairman Kenya Union Clinical of Officers, the Chairman, Association of Public Health Professionals Kenya, the CEO, Kenya Medical Association (KMA), the Chairperson, Council of Governors and the Chairperson, Commission on Administrative Justice.

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