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JOINT MEMORANDUM CIRCULAR NO. 2020-003

**GUIDELINES GOVERNING THE CONDUCT OF ESSENTIAL WORK MEETINGS
AND EVENTS IN AREAS UNDER GENERAL COMMUNITY QUARANTINE**

WHEREAS, pursuant to Republic Act (RA) No. 9593 or the *Tourism Act of 2009*, the Department of Tourism (DOT) is mandated to promulgate rules and regulations governing the operations and activities of all tourism enterprises;

WHEREAS, the Department of Trade and Industry (DTI) is mandated under Executive Order No. 292 dated 25 July 1987 to be the primary coordinative, promotive, facilitative and regulatory arm of the Executive Branch of government in the area of trade, industry and investments, and shall act as catalyst for intensified private sector activity in order to accelerate and sustain economic growth;

WHEREAS, the Inter-Agency Task Force for the Management of Emerging Infectious Disease (IATF)'s Omnibus Guidelines on the Implementation of Community Quarantine in the Philippines (the "IATF Omnibus Guidelines"), as amended, provides that *"amusement, gaming, and fitness establishments, as well as those in the kids and the tourism industries, and all Category IV industries may not operate;"*

WHEREAS, following the IATF Omnibus Guidelines, DTI Memorandum Circular No. 20-57 dated 31 October 2020 lists *"Live Events, including Meetings, Incentives, Conventions, Exhibitions & Business Events (MICE)"* under Category IV;

WHEREAS, to spur economic recovery, and forward and backward linkages in the tourism sector and other sectors concerned, IATF Resolution No. 87 dated 03 December 2020 ratified the IATF-Technical Working Group's decision *"to allow the conduct of meetings, incentives, conventions, and exhibition events in the following venues in areas under General Community Quarantine: 1. Restaurants, in general; 2. Restaurants attached to hotels; 3. Ballrooms and function halls within hotels; 4. Venues within hotel premises; and 5. Mall atria;"* ("Essential Work Meetings and Events") up to thirty percent (30%) of the venue capacity;

WHEREAS, IATF Resolution No. 87 also directed the Department of Tourism and the Department of Trade and Industry to jointly issue guidelines for the conduct of Essential Work Meetings and Events, without prejudice to stricter protocols which may be imposed by the local government units where these eligible venues may be located;

NOW, THEREFORE, in view of the foregoing, the following Guidelines on the Conduct of Essential Work Meetings and Events Under General Community Quarantine are hereby issued:

I. GENERAL PROVISIONS

Section 1. Short Title. – This Circular shall be known as *"Guidelines for Essential Work Meetings and Events Under General Community Quarantine."*

Section 2. Definition of Terms. For purposes of these Guidelines, the following terms are hereby defined as follows:

- (a) "Board Meeting" shall refer to a business meeting of the board of directors of a company or organization at which organizational state of affairs, major policies, and courses of action are discussed and decided on.
- (b) "Colloquium" shall refer to an academic congregation at which various experts, lecturers, and specialists deliver informative discussions on particular topics relevant to the academic development of students.
- (c) "Conclave" shall refer to a meeting or assembly of a group of people in secrecy at which the topics discussed and agreed on are kept confidential to the public.
- (d) "Conference/Congress/Convention" shall refer to a multi-day formal congregation at which a number of organizations, entities, or state representatives discuss and agree on various inter-organizational affairs concerning common and individual interests
- (e) "Consumer trade show" shall refer to a business to consumer event showcasing various products, prototypes and inventions designed to attract potential buyers.
- (f) "Essential Work Meetings and Events" shall refer to a congregation of at least two (2) people, with or without external participants, vital to the sustenance of the operations and business interests of the organization and not for recreational or leisure purposes, such as workshops, trainings, seminars, congresses, conferences, conventions, board meetings, colloquia, conclaves, symposia, and consumer trade shows.
- (g) "General Community Quarantine" or "GCQ" shall refer to the implementation of temporary measures limiting movement and transportation, regulation of operating industries, and presence of uniformed personnel to enforce community quarantine protocols.
- (h) "Health Declaration Form" shall refer to a form that a person must fill-out to declare his or her current health condition and travel history for the past fourteen (14) days, substantially following the template in Annex A-1 of the DTI-DOLE Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04-A.
- (i) "Hybrid Event" shall refer to a conference, seminar, workshop or any other meeting which combines a physical or live experience at an event venue with an online or virtual component to allow remote participation or reach a wider audience.
- (j) "Mall atria" shall refer to a part of a shopping mall, which extends up through several floors and often has a glass-roof.
- (k) "Maximum Venue Capacity" shall refer to the maximum number of people that may be physically accommodated inside the premises of the venue or facility, which shall not be more than the limitations set forth under this Circular, the Fire Code of the Philippines and other limitations set by the Local Government Unit.
- (l) "MICE" shall refer to Meeting, Incentive, Convention, Exhibition and business events industry.
- (m) "Modified General Community Quarantine" or "MGCQ" shall refer to the transition phase between GCQ and the New Normal, when the following temporary measures are relaxed and become less necessary: limiting movement and transportation, the regulation of operating industries, and the presence of uniformed personnel to enforce community quarantine protocols.

- (n) "Non-Essential Events" shall refer to gathering of social or political nature and purpose, such as but not limited to sporting events, birthday parties, holiday celebrations, corporate anniversaries, political events, weddings, and family reunions.
- (o) "Seminar" shall refer to an educational program at which an expert or resource speaker and a group of people convene to study, discuss, and exchange information about a particular subject.
- (p) "Symposium" shall refer to an open-public assembly at which speakers and experts discuss an important topic concerning the audience and the participating public may also make presentations and deliver its opinions and ideas.
- (q) "Training" shall refer to an educational program aimed to help participants acquire certain job-specific knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes necessary to meet the competencies demanded by a particular job or organization.
- (r) "Workshop" shall refer to an educational program intended to develop the skills and aptitude of a group of people in a particular field or subject through oral discussions, practical exercises, and sharing of participants' knowledge and experiences

Section 3. Scope and Coverage. This Circular shall apply to areas under General Community Quarantine.

II. CONDUCT OF ESSENTIAL WORK MEETINGS AND EVENTS IN AREAS UNDER GENERAL COMMUNITY QUARANTINE

Section 4. Permitted Venues. The conduct of Essential Work Meetings and Events shall be allowed in the following venues in areas under GCQ:

- a. Restaurants, in general;
- b. Restaurants attached to hotels;
- c. Ballrooms and function halls within hotels;
- d. Venues within hotel premises; and
- e. Mall atria.

Section 5. Exclusions. The following venues shall not be allowed to hold or accept any event, even Essential Work Meetings or Events, during GCQ:

- a. Hotels that are concurrently being used as quarantine or isolation facilities for repatriated OFWs or returning overseas Filipinos or as quarters for health workers; and
- b. Standalone MICE venues.

Section 6. Permitted Essential Work Meetings and Events. Subject to the minimum public health and safety standards and protocols set under relevant issuances, such as DOH Administrative Order No. 2020-0015, Series of 2020 dated 27 April 2020, DTI-Department of Labor and Employment Joint Memorandum Circular No. 20-04, Series of 2020 on Workplace Prevention and Control of COVID-19, and applicable Local Government Unit (LGU) requirements, the venues provided under Section 4 shall be allowed to hold Essential Work Meetings and Events; *Provided*, that not more than thirty percent (30%) of the Maximum Venue Capacity shall be occupied. Such Essential Work Meetings and Events shall include:

- a. Workshops;
- b. Trainings;
- c. Seminars;

- d. Congresses;
- e. Conferences;
- f. Conventions;
- g. Board meetings;
- h. Colloquia;
- i. Conclaves,
- j. Symposia; and
- k. Consumer trade shows or product launch events.

Non-Essential Events shall be strictly prohibited.

Section 7. Permitted Participants. Only individuals with ages fifteen (15) years old and above, except those with immunodeficiency, comorbidities or are pregnant, shall be permitted to participate in Essential Work Meetings and Events.

Section 8. Interzonal and Intrazonal Movement. The rules on interzonal and intrazonal movement under pertinent IATF Guidelines shall be observed. For this purpose, only participants from areas placed under GCQ and MGCQ shall be allowed to participate in Essential Work Meetings and Events. Individuals from areas under stricter forms of Community Quarantine shall not be allowed to attend Essential Work Meetings and Events.

Section 9. Local Government Unit Concurrence. Notwithstanding compliance with the foregoing requirements, the conduct of the Essential Work Meetings and Events shall be subject to applicable restrictions, rules, or ordinances of the LGU where the eligible venues are located.

III. HEALTH AND SAFETY STANDARDS

Section 10. Safety First Tourism Ten New Norms. In the conduct of Essential Work Meetings and Events, the following standards shall be observed:

- (a) Mandatory use of facemasks and face shields for staff, guests, and suppliers. The use of reusable facemasks is encouraged, while ensuring the proper washing, sanitation and handling procedures. Other personal protective equipment (PPE) such as hairnet, disposable gloves, eye protector, apron, etc. may also be worn by staff and suppliers as necessary depending on the scope of work;
- (b) Body temperature checks for staff, participants or guests and suppliers;
- (c) Availability of sanitation and hygiene kits for staff, participants or guests and suppliers;
- (d) Increased frequency in deep cleaning and sanitation. Practices for sound management of chemical products shall be implemented to avoid impacts on human health (staff, guests and suppliers) and the environment;
- (e) Limited capacity in the venues, elevators, and transport;
- (f) Installation of barriers and markers promoting physical distancing;
- (g) Limited food service;
- (h) Contactless transaction using digital technology;
- (i) Staff training on health and emergency protocols and provision of integrated health plans; and

- (j) Use of contactless greetings such as the Filipino Brand of Service “*Mabuhay Gesture*.”

Section 11. Participants, Guests, Employees, Service Providers, and Venue Handling. In addition to the minimum public health and safety standards and protocols, participants or guests, employees, venue and all other service providers shall comply with the following protocols:

- (a) Completion of Health Declaration and Contact Tracing Form for all participants or guests, employees and suppliers;
- (b) Movement of participants or guests shall be limited to their assigned seats, meal tables or food stations and use of restrooms. Switching of seats is strictly prohibited;
- (c) No live entertainment;
- (d) Hybrid Events are encouraged;
- (e) Observance of existing guidelines of the national government or LGU where event is held;
- (f) Plated meals shall be the standard means of food packaging or attendees shall be served where they are seated;
- (g) Self-service is prohibited. Service of food and beverages shall be done by service staff to minimize contact with food items;
- (h) Meal tables shall be set at a distance of two (2) meters apart;
- (i) Chairs shall be distanced at least one (1) meter on all sides;
- (j) Aisles shall be set at a minimum of two (2) meters;
- (k) In waiting areas and lounges, a distance of at least one (1) meter between tables, seats, and seat rows shall be maintained. If seats are fixed, alternate seats shall be marked out;
- (l) Room Seating Arrangement shall be as follows:
 - 1. For Conference and breakout rooms, a distance of one (1) to two (2) meters between seats;
 - 2. For theatre-style set-up, a checkerboard set-up shall be used, removing every other chair and arranging it so that no one is seated behind someone else;
 - 3. For U-shaped conference set up, a maximum of two (2) people at each 6-ft. table, instead of the usual standard for three (3) people per 6-ft. table; and
 - 4. For Hollow square conference set up, a maximum of two (2) people at each 6-ft table, instead of the usual standard of three (3) people per 6-ft. table.

IV. OTHER PROVISIONS

Section 12. Compliance with Other Issuances. Venues catering to Essential Work Meetings and Events shall comply with other relevant IATF, DOT, DTI, DOH, and DOLE issuances on health and safety standards, as well as rules and regulations imposed by the LGU having jurisdiction over the venue.

Section 13. Compliance Monitoring and Penalties. DOT and DTI shall continue its strict compliance monitoring of the covered venues through its post-audit mechanism. Inspection by DOLE, DOH, and the LGU's Health Office, as applicable, may also be conducted at any time.

Any violation of this Circular may subject the venue to the appropriate fines and penalties including but not limited to temporary closure, and/or revocation of its DOT accreditation, in accordance with relevant laws, rules, and regulations.

Section 14. Separability Clause. If any portion or provision of this Circular is declared null and void or unconstitutional, the other provisions not affected thereby shall continue to be in force and effect.

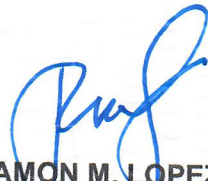
Section 15. Repealing Clause. This Circular supersedes or amends DOT Administrative Order No. 2020-003 and all other DOT and DTI issuances inconsistent herewith. All relevant provisions not inconsistent with this Circular shall remain effective and enforceable.

Section 16. Effectivity. This Circular shall take effect immediately upon filing with the University of the Philippines – Office of the National Administrative Register (UP-ONAR) and shall remain effective until otherwise superseded, amended, or repealed accordingly.

For guidance and strict compliance.

29 December 2020


BERNADETTE ROMULO-PUYAT
Secretary
Department of Tourism


RAMON M. LOPEZ
Secretary
Department of Trade and Industry

