



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA



MEMO – SUPPORT FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN HEALTH PRODUCTS REGULATORY AUTHORITY

Date:	26 June 2021		
To:	Acting Minister Mmamoloko Kubayi-Ngubane Honorable Acting Minister of Health	From:	Ministerial Advisory Committee (MAC) on COVID-19

RE: SUPPORT FOR THE SOUTH AFRICAN HEALTH PRODUCTS REGULATORY AUTHORITY

The South African Health Products Regulatory Authority (SAHPRA) has this year come under sustained attack from activist groups, lobbyists and political parties. Most recently, the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) have alleged, without any evidence, that SAHPRA is “captured” and “controlled by the West’s pharmaceutical establishment” and demanded that SAHPRA bypass its registration process to authorize two particular vaccines – Sinovac and Sputnik V. The party has reportedly also personally targeted SAHPRA’s chair (Prof Helen Rees) and CEO (Dr Boitumelo Semete-Makokotlela), a process that has included physical threats to both.

A pattern of gratuitous attacks on SAHPRA, often from vested interests with regard to therapeutics and vaccines used for COVID-19, is becoming evident. SAHPRA provides reassurance to all consumers that registered medicines are safe and efficacious. The processes involved are thorough, complex and take time, although expedited procedures have been implemented in response to COVID-19-related urgency. Subjecting medicine approval to political or commercial interests will destroy that confidence. While no institution should be spared reasoned criticism, it is important that the regulator be insulated from baseless accusations and threats of violence if it is to perform its role effectively.

Safeguarding the integrity of a statutory body is a constitutional obligation of the government. We strongly urge the Ministry of Health publicly affirm its support for SAHPRA and the vital function it performs in the national interest, and to facilitate the necessary assistance and protection to those of SAHPRA’s members who may require it.

Thank you for consideration of this request.

Kind regards,



PROF KOLEKA MLISANA

Co-Chairpersons: Ministerial Advisory Committee on COVID-19

DATE: 26 June 2021



PROF MARIAN JACOBS

CC:

- » **Dr S Buthelezi (Director-General)**
- » **Dr T Pillay (Deputy Director-General)**
- » **Incident Management Team**