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"PEOPLE, PLANET
AND PROSPERITY",
THE THREE PS OF
THE ROME SUMMIT

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Minister Elizabeth Gomez Alcorta

TOWARDS A MORE JUST, EQUAL, AND VIOLENCE-FREE SOCIETY

By Elizabeth Gomez Alcorta, Minister of Women, Genders and Diversity

Early December 30 was undoubtedly an historic day for Argentina. The approval of both Law 27,610 that guarantees access to voluntary interruption of pregnancy until the 14th week of gestation (IVE), and Law 27,611 on the protection and comprehensive health care up to the first 1,000 days of life of children, represents a vital step to the expansion of the rights of women and pregnant people.

The 131 votes in favor of the IVE in the Chamber of Deputies and the 38 in the Senate cannot be fully understood without reviewing recent history. In legislative terms, the country is at the forefront of access to civil rights, which has transformed the material life conditions for thousands of people, and continues to permeate the unequal patriarchal structure, striving to build a society that is truly more just, equal, and free from violence.



Once again, I share with you the latest edition of our Embassy Newsletter. This edition includes an article written by Minister Elizabeth Gomez Alcorta about the latest steps taken by Argentina to build a more just, equal, and free from violence society.

This issue also includes an article about a therapeutic serum developed entirely in our country to treat patients with COVID-19, a significant advance in the fight against the disease.

Finally, an article on a bilateral meeting with the G20 Italian Sherpa, in which we exchanged our viewpoints on the common responsibility that we have this year due to the crucial global challenges ahead.

Jorge Argüello
Ambassador to the United States

AN EVER-PRESENT STATE IS ONE THAT STANDS BY WOMEN AND GESTATING PEOPLE IN THE LIFE PROJECT THEY DECIDE TO UNDERTAKE.

Likewise, we also find, just in the last decade, the Law of Gender Identity (26,743 / 2012), Equal Marriage (26,618 / 2010) and Gender Parity (27,412 / 2017), among many others. It should be noted that the IVE bill was sent by the Executive Branch, for the first time in our country's history; this was advantageous when debating and forging alliances within the Legislative Branch.

Likewise, in social terms, this succession of approved policies must be analyzed taking into consideration the struggle of the feminist and diversity movements, substantial engines of legislative activity. The victory achieved with the enactment of the Law has as a key pillar the National Campaign for the Right to Abortion, a feminist movement that has been pushing for it to be legal, safe, and free for more than 20 years.

Since the creation of the above-mentioned campaign in 2005, after the National Meeting of Women held in the province of Mendoza, to the present, a total of eight bills were introduced for the decriminalization and voluntary interruption of pregnancy. In 2018 the bill was discussed in both chambers, and it was then that the call was echoed, permeating the most diverse sectors and places in the country. The possibility that this could happen grew over the years, in an indefatigable struggle to achieve autonomy over our bodies and build a truly more equal society.

The green tide -a metaphor with which we conceptualize the feminist movement and the diversity that massively increased the call for the right to abortion- set the stage so that now, two years after the historical vigils during the debate over the IVE in Congress, this Law was passed in Argentina.

And why is this approval so important? Because clandestine abortions are a reflection of the structural inequality typical of patriarchal society; it became a public health problem that was solved mainly thanks to an ever-present State. It is estimated that between 370,000 and 520,000 abortions are performed every year, of which a large percentage end up in hospital admissions due to medical complications. Sometimes they lead to long-term health problems or, in the worst scenario: death. In turn, it is estimated that there are around 1,500 criminal cases currently in progress for complaints of clandestine abortions.

An ever-present State is one that stands by women and gestating people in the life project they decide to undertake. Therefore, both the IVE Law and the 1,000-day Comprehensive Care Law are aimed at promoting a public policy that is based on a full-fledged support. It is about guaranteeing full access and benefitting from the highest level of health that the State can provide, under conditions of equality for all.

The empirical evidence shows that in those places where this practice was legalized, abortions and maternal deaths as a consequence of secrecy and lack of asepsis have dropped. This is the case of Uruguay, which since the approval has not registered deaths due to abortion within the health system, and that of Mexico City where, as of 2013, the number of practices stabilized and began to decrease.

This happens because with the legalization of the voluntary interruption of pregnancy there is greater and enhanced access to information, thanks to a virtuous circle of care and prevention, through counseling in sexual and reproductive health, and also through the provision of post-abortion contraception.

Another significant issue is cost difference between safe and clandestine practices. IVE destresses the healthcare system and reduces the cost of medical care required due to complications derived from unsafe abortions.

Regarding the next steps we must take, first of all, implement this Law, and, in parallel, dismiss the criminal cases pending for clandestine abortions. Taking into account that Argentina has a tripartite and federal health system - public health, prepaid and health insurance – and IVE will require different strategies and tracks for each province.

The debate on the interruption of pregnancy runs through us as a society, and the existence of

conservative sectors in different areas that have shown great resistance and are against the expansion of rights is not new. We know that laws, by themselves, do not modify realities, which is why the ongoing work of ensuring their correct and effective implementation is key.

But we are also aware that in Latin America, which is deeply unequal, the main tool for social transformation is public policy. For this reason, the approval of the Law of voluntary interruption of pregnancy not only represents a victory for the country but is also a milestone for the entire region.

With the IVE Law, Argentina joins Cuba, Puerto Rico, Guyana, Mexico City and Uruguay. We trust that it will serve as a way to drive its legalization in other countries where this right is still restricted, and that it will allow progress towards more just and equitable societies, where women and gestating people can freely decide about their bodies. ■

President Alberto Fernández and Minister Elizabeth Gomez Alcorta



PROGRESS AGAINST COVID-19: ARGENTINA BEGINS USING A HYPERIMMUNE SERUM DEVELOPED IN OUR COUNTRY

This week Argentina began to distribute a therapeutic serum developed entirely in our country to treat patients with COVID-19, a significant advance in the fight against the disease, and is the result of the high quality of Argentine science, and the commitment and efforts of our researchers and health professionals.

This hyperimmune equine serum, approved as a treatment for patients with moderate to severe conditions by the regulatory agency ANMAT was based on the significant benefits demonstrated by the Phase 2/3 clinical trial.

This randomized, controlled, and double-blind trial was carried out to measure the safety and efficacy of this treatment to provide passive immunity and polyclonal antibodies generated by hyperimmunization.

The results of the study showed significant benefits, since this therapy was demonstrated to be safe, and reduced mortality by almost half (45%) in patients with severe disease. Furthermore, in the patients subject to the trial, intensive care hospitalization was reduced by 24%, and the need for mechanical ventilation by 36%, compared to the control group. On the other hand, the participants showed considerable clinical benefit throughout the 28 days of the follow-up after the treatment.

President Alberto Fernández (center) at Inmunova, company incubated on the UNSAM campus.



COVIFAB® IS AN INNOVATIVE IMMUNOTHERAPY BASED ON EQUINE POLYCLONAL ANTIBODIES, WITH A SIGNIFICANT NEUTRALIZING CAPACITY OF THE SARS-COV-2 VIRUS THAT BLOCKS IT AND PREVENTS ITS SPREAD.

CoviFab® is an innovative immunotherapy based on equine polyclonal antibodies, which has the capacity to neutralize the SARS-CoV-2 virus, as it blocks it and prevents its spread. It also has the advantage that it can be produced quickly and on a large-scale basis.

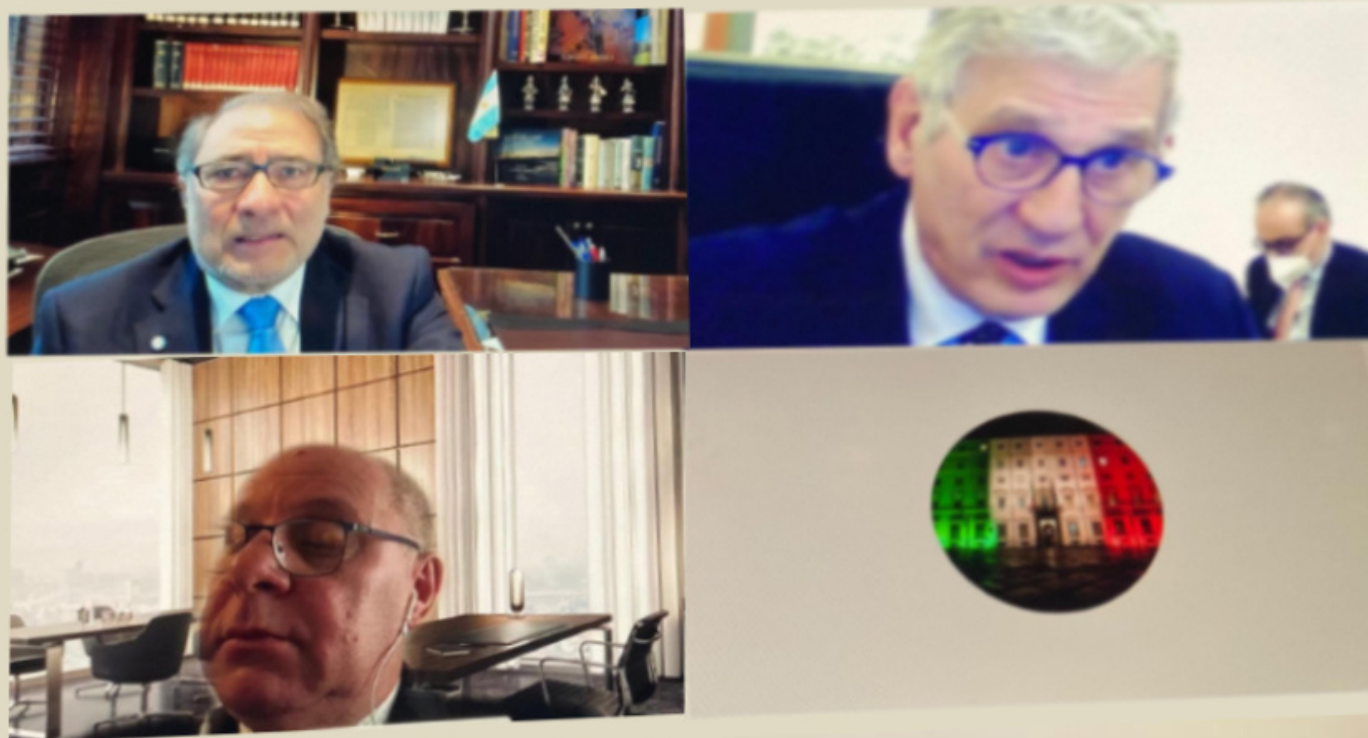
The development of the drug is an outcome of public-private efforts led by the Immunova laboratory and the Argentine Biological Institute (BIOL), the National Administration of Laboratories and Health Institutes "Dr. Carlos G. Malbrán" (ANLIS), with the collaboration of the Fundación Instituto Leloir (FIL), Mabxience, CONICET and the National University of San Martín (UNSAM). The distribution and marketing is carried out by the Elea laboratory.

Immunova is a technology company incubated on the UNSAM campus that specializes in the research, design, and development of innovative drugs for diseases for which there is no available treatment.

In March 2020, national authorities formed the Coronavirus Unit to make available to the government those technological projects, human resources, infrastructure, and equipment that may be required to carry out research, prevention, diagnosis, and treatment of the COVID-19 virus. The hyperimmune serum project was one of 84 initiatives selected to receive funding equivalent to \$100,000.

Initiatives such as this one demonstrate the benefits of a partnership between diverse stakeholders when working towards a common objective, and the commitment of the State to mobilize necessary resources to provide tools that place us in a better position in situations such as this one. It is also worth mentioning the results of the clinical study on convalescent plasma therapy carried out in our country and published this week in The New England Journal of Medicine journal. Through joint public-private efforts, this thorough study evaluated the efficacy of the early administration of high-titer convalescent plasma to mildly ill infected older adults, and results showed that its administration significantly reduces the risk of a severe progression of the disease.

The hope of finding an early end to this pandemic has been a shared sentiment since the beginning of the pandemic, and while the commendable achievement of the development of different vaccines brings us closer to that goal, the fact that availability is not immediately available to the entire population reinforces the importance of having mitigating factors for COVID-19 effects, such as the treatment developed in Argentina, which will help us move forward until we achieve a long-awaited immunity.



Above L to R: Argentine Sherpa, Amb. Jorge Argüello and Italian Sherpa, Amb. Pietro Benassi. Below: Sous Sherpa, Amb. Eduardo Tempone.

"People, Planet and Prosperity", the three Ps of the Rome Summit

A few weeks after the transfer of the G20 Presidency to Italy, its Sherpa, Ambassador Pietro Benassi, held a working meeting on January 11 with the Argentine Sherpa, Ambassador Jorge Argüello. They exchanged their viewpoints on the common responsibility that the international forum has this year due to the crucial global challenges ahead.

Every day the pandemic reminds us of how interconnected we are internationally. However, to mitigate its health, social and economic effects, the world must build global and effective responses. The G20 plays a key role in strengthening multilateral cooperation, so that we can act together and achieve a common goal.

President Alberto Fernández made reference to this a few days ago: "The world's reconstruction in the post-pandemic era is an opportunity to advance in this regard, in which global cooperation and multilateralism play a leading role."

From the pandemic to climate change, from supporting technological innovation and international trade, the decisions to be adopted by the Leaders when they meet in Rome on October 30 and 31, 2021 at the Summit of Heads of State and Government, will shape the lives of generations to come. Although each one of these problems predate the pandemic, COVID-19 has exposed them, brought them to light, and amplified them.

THE G20 PLAYS A KEY ROLE IN STRENGTHENING MULTILATERAL COOPERATION, SO THAT WE CAN ACT TOGETHER AND ACHIEVE A COMMON GOAL.

Ambassador Benassi explained that the program that will guide the work this year focuses on three key pillars or priorities: “People, Planet, Prosperity”. Three words that highlight the need to take care of humanity and the planet through an integrated approach, able of ensuring a strong post-pandemic economic recovery that is inclusive, resilient, and also sustainable.

In terms of “People”, the focus will be in the fight against poverty and inequality, and the defense of the most vulnerable groups, such as women, youth, and informal workers, who are the ones most suffering the effects of the pandemic. To do this, ways to strengthen financial inclusion, financing business activities and protection for the most fragile categories will be explored, not only at the economic and social level, but will also include health.

This is important for Argentina and for Latin America as well. The economic and social impacts in the region have been among the worst worldwide. According to specialized agencies, economies are expected to contract by an average of more than eight percent this year. Unemployment and hunger soared, and almost all the progress made to reduce poverty in the last 20 years could be lost.

With regard to the “Planet”, commitments such as the Paris Agreement and the implementation of the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals will be prominent in the 2021 agenda, with a focus on renewable energies, energy efficiency, and more sustainable and greener urban spaces.

As to “Prosperity”, the aim is to accelerate the digitalization process as an opportunity for development and reducing inequalities; digital infrastructure, and the relationship between the digital revolution, work, and productivity.

Argentina shares these objectives and will work with the Italian presidency to achieve a more inclusive and sustainable globalization, which will become a driving force for the implementation of the United Nations 2030 Agenda. Global recovery cannot, and should not, be just a matter of GDP, but rather a path that prioritizes the collective well-being of citizens around the world.

Argentina is prepared for an intense year ahead. The goal is to build today for tomorrow, and give our children a better, more inclusive, equitable world, one that respects nature. ■

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Flickr: /photos/ARGinUSA

arginfocus@embassyofargentina.us

eeeuu.cancilleria.gob.ar