



Republic of the Philippines  
Department of Health  
**OFFICE OF THE SECRETARY**

Building 1, San Lazaro Compound, Rizal Avenue  
Sta. Cruz, Manila, Philippines

Tel. Nos. (632) 7119582, 7119503 and 781-4362, Telex No. (632) 743-1829



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## **DOH OFFICIAL STATEMENT ON THE TOTAL BAN ON FOREIGN TRANSPLANTS**

In consonance with the presidential directive by Her Excellency President Gloria Macapagal-Arroyo, the Department of Health (DOH) today is announcing a **TOTAL BAN** on foreign transplants. Under this directive, all foreigners are banned from accessing organs from Filipino donors.

This directive comes at a time when the Philippine government faces the ethical and moral imperative to protect Filipinos, particularly the poor, from the black market sale of internal organs.

Earlier this year, the DOH issued Administrative Order (AO) No. 2008-0004, otherwise known as the Revised National Policy on Living Non-Related Donor and Transplantation and its Implementing Structures amending AO No. 124, series of 2002. The revised AO sets the general guidelines and ethical principles whereby the act of donation and conduct of transplantation using non-related donors are managed and regulated.

In the past few years, there has been a reported increase in the number of kidney transplants done on foreign patients with kidneys coming from Filipino living non-related donors, most of them from poor communities (62% increase from 2002 to 2006). It was also observed that the 10% limit in foreign transplants has been exceeded in many transplant facilities, both in accredited and non-accredited hospitals of DOH.

Today, the Philippine Government asserts its mandate to protect the poorest and most vulnerable sectors of our society adhering to international ethical standards and the WHA resolution which prohibits the international trafficking and commercialization of human tissues and organs. We reiterate that organ transplant is **NOT** part of Philippine Medical Tourism and that organ donation is being promoted only among well-informed, free-willing and altruistic donors without any monetary reward or improper/unethical inducements.

All hospitals and transplant facilities and medical practitioners found to violate this directive are criminally liable as promulgated by the Anti-Trafficking in Persons Act (RA 9208). Likewise, unscrupulous organizations and business outfits claiming to be associated with DOH in the commercialization of organ transplants under the guise of medical tourism will be met with appropriate penalties and sanctions.

In light of this, the Philippine Board for Organ Donation and Transplantation will continue to strengthen systems to ensure the protection of Filipino donors. The Philippine Government through the DOH will also focus on the development of the deceased organ program and organ transplantation from living related donors.