

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**FIA Foundation enables Vietnamese motorbike helmet social enterprise to produce surgical masks for COVID-19 crisis**

HANOI, Vietnam – 27 April, 2020

Face masks to protect from COVID-19 are to be produced by a Vietnamese social enterprise's motorcycle helmet factory thanks to a new partnership to save lives and livelihoods by Vietnam-based non-profit AIP Foundation and the FIA Foundation, a global philanthropy promoting sustainable mobility and healthy environments.

To address the global personal protective equipment shortages for frontline staff, AIP Foundation and its social enterprise, the nonprofit helmet manufacturer Protec, are transforming a portion of their factory operations in Vietnam to produce surgical masks. The FIA Foundation will provide funds of €250,000 for the production lines of specialized machinery and equipment, and will also support global distribution efforts.

Production will be ramped up quickly, starting with an initial capacity of 1.5 million masks per month. Not only saving lives globally, the project will also contribute to the local and regional economy by purchasing supplies and securing jobs. Protec employs over 200 employees in Vietnam, a significant proportion of whom are living with disabilities, a population for which employment is often a challenge. Thanks to special adaptations within the factory, all employees are able to work safely and comfortably, and will now be able to continue to provide for their families.

“Italy and the US are immediate targets, to be followed rapidly by other European countries, and then poorer developing nations,” says Greig Craft, President and Founder of AIP Foundation. **“Italy and Vietnam enjoy a special relationship because of free medical surgeries for children carried out by a team of volunteer Italian surgeons that we have organized for the past eight years. When COVID-19 hit, I thought how could we make use of our large facility and workforce? As a US citizen living in Hanoi, I also felt an obligation to help my people back home,”** Craft adds.

Initially established by the FIA in 2001, FIA Foundation and FIA have been at the forefront of global road safety in collaboration with the WHO and United Nations. Executive Director of the FIA Foundation Saul Billingsley says **“AIP Foundation and Protec have a world-renowned reputation for innovative approaches to saving lives. The FIA Foundation is proud to be working alongside them in this global emergency as the focus shifts from crash helmets to protective masks. We hope this partnership will play a part in tackling the global shortage of PPE as we all respond to COVID-19.”**

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About AIP Foundation

AIP Foundation is a nonprofit organization dedicated to preventing road injuries and fatalities in low and middle-income countries. For more than 20 years, AIP Foundation has been delivering effective road safety programs in locations across Asia and Africa. To find out more, visit www.aip-foundation.org or connect with us on Twitter @AIPFoundation.

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About Protec:

Protec is a social enterprise established by AIP Foundation producing ethically made helmets. Protec has a helmet factory in Hanoi and an extensive distribution network all across the country, plus a showroom in Cambodia. Net operating income of the factory and sale profit are channeled to campaigns aimed at raising awareness of the community and educational projects of traffic safety through the operations of AIP Foundation in Vietnam, Thailand and Cambodia.

About FIA Foundation:

The FIA Foundation is a UK-based international charity supporting advocacy, programmes and research in road traffic injury and sustainable mobility. To respond to COVID-19 the FIA Foundation, as part of the FIA's #RaceAgainstCovid, is providing financial support to a range of partners and activities for pandemic response and, PPE production and logistical support, antibody saliva testing, and vaccine research.

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