

# Duterte says face shields for hospital use only — Sotto

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President Rodrigo Roa Duterte (Screenshot from RTVM)

MANILA, Philippines — President Rodrigo Duterte has agreed that face shields should only be worn inside hospitals.

This was according to Senate President Vicente Sotto III, who was in a meeting with the President in Malacañang Wednesday night.

“Last night, the President agreed that face shields should only be used in hospitals. Allowed us to remove ours! [Attention] DOH (Department of Health)!,” Sotto said in a tweet Thursday morning.

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— Tito Sotto (@sotto\_tito) [June 16, 2021](#)

Asked if the President said he would direct the government’s pandemic task force to adjust the protocols on face shields, Sotto told [INQUIRER.net](#): “Something like that.”

“I remember him (Duterte) saying he will tell DOH,” he added.

In a separate interview, Sotto recalled what happened during the meeting.

“‘We’re the only country using this in the world,’ sabi naming ganon, sabi niya (Duterte) ‘Yeah, I’ll tell DOH, tigilan na ‘yan,’” the Senate leader said.

‘We’re the only country using this in the world,’ we told him, he said ‘Yeah, I’ll tell DOH, to stop this.)

“Parang ganon e. Hindi ko matandaan yung exact words niya pero [sinabihan niya kami] na ‘alisin na ‘yan.’ Parang gano’n e. Kaya inalis naming lahat,” he added.

(It’s like that but I can’t remember his exact words but he told us to take it off, so we did.)

Senate Majority Leader Juan Miguel Zubiri, who was also in Malacañang Wednesday night, confirmed that the President did ask them to take their face shields off.

“We had a chance to briefly meet with the President on the side of the stage before the signing ceremony and were wearing the face shields of which he casually mentioned that we can take them off so we can hear each other. Then the topic was focused on the need for face shields and if they were truly necessary,” Zubiri said in a message to reporters.

“The President acknowledged that [there] were probably one of a very few countries that use them and said that it [is] more needed in situations such as hospitals or high risk areas and jobs,” he added.

But the senator pointed out that the situation in the Palace that night was “unique” since those present were tested for COVID-19 before meeting with Duterte.

“That made everyone absolutely safe in that particular moment. I would like to add that this was an off-the-cuff discussion and not officially discussed on stage or with the public,” he added.

During a Senate Committee of the Whole hearing on Tuesday, Sotto asked government officials present if they have considered “discontinuing” the use of face shields, noting that the Philippines is the only country in the world requiring its use.



(INQUIRER PHOTO / GRIG C. MONTEGRANDE)

In response, Health Secretary Francisco Duque III told the Senate that the use of face shields coupled with face masks and social distancing would provide “greater than 95 percent protection” against the deadly virus, [citing various scientific studies](#).

Nevertheless, Duque said the government may study the proposed scrapping of the face shield policy during this pandemic [once the country’s vaccination coverage has improved](#).

On Wednesday, [Health Undersecretary Leopoldo Vega said face shields may no longer be worn](#) when outdoors as the risk of transmitting COVID-19 in such a setting is minimal.

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