Brahim Oulammou – Director General, Promopharm (a Hikma company) – Morocco



16.04.2015

Tags: doing business, manufactu

The director general of Promopharm explains why Hikma decided to invest in the Moroccan market, why we have to take a long-term perspective when judging the government's reform agenda and how the main priority will always be responding to patient needs

In 2011 Hikma acquired a 63.9 percent stake in Promopharm. Why did Hikma decide to invest in the Moroccan market?

The investment in Morocco follows a straightforward logic: Hikma is present everywhere in the Arab World, it is present in Egypt, Algeria, Tunisia, Saudi Arabia and in all the countries of the Gulf, but Morocco remained the one country missing from its map. For Hikma, Morocco is very important, first for its own domestic market but also due to the many opportunities for entry points it provides into the region and Africa. In addition, despite having production facilities in Europe, Hikma is not yet present in the European market. Today, the company has three production facilities in Europe; and the location of Morocco is certainly a good way into Europe. Given the advantageous and strategic geographical location of Morocco, it was natural for Hikma to develop a presence in the country.

Given the difficult last two to three years for the pharma industry in Morocco, does Hikma consider its acquisition of Promopharm to be a good investment?

It would certainly be considered a good investment. While there isn’t a pharma company in Morocco that hasn’t found the last few years difficult, it is important to take a long-term perspective Hikma´s vision for investing in Morocco today remains the same as it did before. While the local industry has gone through a difficult period, Hikma remains convinced that Morocco is a good investment.

Only a minority of Moroccan patients have access to treatment which is currently reaches below 50 percent of the population. As such, the potential for growth remains considerable. The reforms currently being enacted by the Moroccan government will have a positive long-term impact. They would not become visible immediately as these are projects that take time to show an impact. Improving hospital infrastructure is also crucial; when it comes to access to medicines, this is a key first step. The government is following a logical reform process but it takes time and we are conscious of that. .

We have heard that there are many local laboratories specialising in generics and that too much competition in this area is damaging growth prospects. What is your positioning on the local market?

Our first priority is to respond to local needs. The Moroccan patient needs to have at his or her disposal medications to treat the full range of therapeutic areas. Our objective is to ensure that our products are widely accessible and at affordable prices. Generics clearly have their role to play in this and we make sure that they are available. Likewise, innovative treatments also have an important role to play and we also produce such drugs by working with multinational partners. Promopharm´s turnover is equally generated from generics and originators. And we are aware that medicines that are not currently available for the Moroccan patient, such as biosimilars, need to be in the future. There are many biosimilar products that today are not available on the Moroccan market and we are working to change this, while ensuring that the highest levels of standards are maintained. Moreover all generics that we provide to the Ministry of Health have been authorized either in Europe or the USA.

Hikma excels in the Injectable field, accounting for half of the company´s turnover and produced in the USA and Europe. We look to benefit from Hikma´s experience for the benefit of the Moroccan patient.

Another area in which we are deeply involved is oncology. Hikma has developed a number of products in this area, and has a dedicated structure in Europe for this purpose. These products are of excellent quality that are produced according to European norms and which we look to put at

the disposal of the Moroccan patient.

Oncology is a particularly competitive field in Morocco. What can you bring to this market that is different?

Our objective is to provide oncology treatments that are not yet available in the country. It is indeed a competitive field, but there still are unmet needs and we look to provide alternative products. This is where we see the potential for growth, by providing certain treatments that are not currently being prescribed and therefore increasing patients' options and improving the quality of care

Talking about growth prospects, do you believe Promopharm can use Hikma´s network to become a gateway for the African continent?

Hikma benefits from the power that its subsidiaries have in their respective countries. Promopharm can have a particular advantage given that we have the backing of a much larger entity. Our objective is to use this power to serve West Africa by proving high quality products with affordable prices.

Having started your position at Promopharm just five months ago, what is your five to ten year vision? Morocco still has many unmet needs our main priority will always be to respond to the needs of patients and support the development of the health care sector in the country, which is in line with Hikma strategy and the company culture perpetuated within the Group

Given the large number of patients that don't have access to proper health care system and the reforms currently being enacted by the authorities, we believe in the development of the Moroccan Health Care Sector. This is the most important point to consider and the reason I am optimistic about the potential of the Moroccan pharma market.

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