

6 October 2020

## **ICC ROADMAP FOR RESTORING INTERNATIONAL TRAVEL SAFELY AND QUICKLY**

Dear Ministers,

I write to you on behalf of the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC)—the world's business organisation representing 45 million companies worldwide—about the urgent need to re-open international travel while credibly addressing fears of infection and resurgence.

The immediate reaction—closing borders, zoning, testing on arrival, quarantine—was successful in slowing the spread of the virus. But as the economic toll grows and our medical tools improve, we now must shift to a plan that appropriately balances the need to protect our health and reopen the global economy. Public health authorities, including the WHO and ECDC, recognise that border restrictions do not make sense where there is community spread of the virus within a country.

Until a vaccine is developed and deployed, the simplest and safest path to restore international travel—and a safe and open global economy—is through the development of a G20-wide pre-departure testing system that would only allow non-infectious people to travel. The precipitous drop in demand for international trade will only rebound once travellers can be assured that flights are infection free.

With the right policy settings, technological tools and industry buy-in, ICC believes we can achieve Covid-free travel that would ensure passenger safety and consumer confidence with administrative ease.

A successful global ecosystem to restore trust in air travel would require three key elements:

- 1. Recognised standards for testing.** All prospective passengers should undergo molecular or antigenic swabbing tests as close as possible to the time of departure, and certainly within 72 hours. Passengers would present test results when boarding. The ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Task Force is developing guidance on testing. Following this guidance, G20 governments should implement a common set of approved testing protocols that would be mutually recognised. Such mutual recognition would provide all G20 countries with confidence that incoming passengers have undergone testing that would meet their local standards.
- 2. Accredited testing facilities.** To give governments and passengers confidence and to support mutual recognition, passengers should undertake testing at recognised and reputable medical centres. In non-G20 countries with less well-developed health systems, International SOS, the world's largest medical and security services firm, which has over 1,000 medical centres including in all G20 countries, could quickly be given such accreditation. The combination of using recognised testing standards at accredited facilities would offer the highest possible level of confidence that all passengers are Covid-free when travelling.
- 3. A standard platform for holding test certificates.** If all G20 countries were to use a standardised digital platform for holding test results, customs and health agencies would be able to have full confidence in the documentation submitted by passengers. The International

Chamber of Commerce has rolled out a series of pilot projects—working with leading medical, technology, aviation and shipping firms—that could be used for this purpose. Most significantly, ICC AOKpass—a mobile app designed specifically as a “digital passport” to hold relevant medical information, including Covid-19 test results—enables passengers to quickly and easily show relevant medical documentation to government authorities (such as customs agencies) by simply scanning a QR code. Importantly, ICC AOKpass provides complete privacy for passengers and renders fraud impossible by storing medical certificates in the blockchain and leaving certificates exclusively in the user’s hands through fingerprint authentication.

Establishing a G20-wide pre-departure testing system along these lines would minimise travel-related health risks and allow international borders to be reopened safely—with significant economic benefits that would flow to all G20 countries and the broader world economy. More specifically, safely restoring international travel would have the following significant benefits:

- 1. Short-term: minimise the direct damage to the travel and tourism sectors.** International tourism faces no less than an existential crisis. The massive fall in demand (around 70% by August) has so far translated into \$705 billion in lost export revenues and could reduce G20 GDP by 2% by the end of the year (UNWTO). With over 100 million direct tourism jobs at risk (UNWTO) and unemployment potentially growing by more than 20% in some countries (UNCTAD), restoring confidence in international travel will be critical to saving jobs. Further, adopting such an approach could help preserve the viability of millions of MSMEs—representing 80% of the tourism industry—for whom continued disruption will likely inflict permanent damage.
- 2. Medium-term: minimise broader economic impacts.** Beyond the direct impact on tourism and travel (which account for 10% of global employment), re-establishing global connectivity would also have much broader economic effects. Given that travel plays a critical facilitation role in international trade, restoring safe travel would evidently help reboot world trade. And given that the loss of global income and fiscal stimulus due to the pandemic has so far cost \$20 trillion (IMF, June), policymakers must take all actions that can encourage a safe return to international commerce.
- 3. Long-term: prepare for a full global re-opening.** Establishing global, effective and trustworthy systems for Covid test results now would also be useful for enabling a fuller return to international travel once vaccines are available. The same infrastructure—recognised standards, accredited medical centres and standard platforms for holding certificates—could ultimately be extended to vaccine certificates if and when vaccines become available, at which point there will be considerable pressure for vaccinated people to be able to work and travel.

ICC stands ready to assist G20 countries help restore international travel, preserve the travel and tourism sector and other directly affected industries, and build infrastructure to safely minimise the economic damage caused by Covid-19.

Yours sincerely,



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ICC Secretary General