



**Remarks
by the Secretary General
of the International Civil Aviation Organization,
Dr. Fang Liu,
to the UNWTO Global Tourism Crisis Committee Meeting**

(Madrid, Spain, 18 January 2021)

1. Confronted with renewed outbreaks, governments today are re-imposing stringent COVID-19 lockdowns, border closures, and travel restrictions, even at times contradictory to the World Health Organisation recommendations.
2. As the world now confronts the second and third waves of this pandemic, these latest measures are weighing very heavily on global travel and tourism.
3. According to the latest ICAO economic impact analysis, overall domestic and international air travel recovery has moderated since September, but owing almost exclusively to resumptions in domestic travel.
4. International traffic has remained far below pre-pandemic levels, with overall 74 per cent or 1.4 billion fewer passengers flying in 2020.
5. While COVID-19 vaccines are now being rolled out worldwide, and vaccination certificates are being developed, we have seen no evidence that vaccination protects against transmission; and the duration of protection of an individual that has been vaccinated has not been firmly established.
6. Given the current global production capacity of COVID-19 vaccines, there is limited access to COVID-19 vaccines, and countries need to prioritize vaccination for populations at risk.
7. What this tells us is that vaccines will not bring significant relief to the world, or to air transport or tourism sector bottom lines, for some time to come.

8. It also underscores the critical and ongoing challenge of bringing governments and industry more closely together to coordinate effective, but not excessive solutions to travelling safely while the virus is still among us.
9. The ICAO manual on *Testing and Cross Border Risk Management Measures* highlights a multi-layered risk mitigation approach to help achieve this effective balance.
10. The combination of several public health measures, including testing, as outlined in the manual continues to be warranted in the medium- to long-term, most especially as our levels of understanding on the efficacy and safety of vaccines steadily improves.
11. States who decided to use testing as a routine health screening method for air travellers in their multilayer risk management strategies are encouraged to share information and expand on the network of travel-safe Public Health Corridors which has already been established.
12. Proper certification of vaccines may be required in the near future, but in the meantime the international acceptance of test results must be a key priority. Currently there is no agreed-upon means to do so country-to-country on an irrefutable and fraud-resistant basis.
13. While these efforts toward an international testing framework continue, not traveling while ill, wearing masks, and abiding the other practices outlined in the ICAO *CART Take Off Guidance* remain critical to safe travel.
14. When and where they are required, COVID-19 test results and vaccination certificates should be provided in a timely and reliable manner, allowing for the fast facilitation of travellers while ensuring equity in their access.
15. Such solutions should also be respectful of privacy and personal data, adaptable to varying infrastructure and conditions, able to deliver quick results, and financially reasonable for all concerned.
16. A number of different approaches are currently being developed, and it is essential we work to ensure their effective interoperability.

17. ICAO for its part is presently proposing the Visible Digital Seal or 'VDS' solution, which employs a digitally signed barcode that can be carried in a smartphone or printed on paper.
18. VDS-based test certificates will be secure, trustworthy, privacy-protecting, and interoperable, built on open standards and tailored to the capabilities of existing infrastructure.
19. In the meantime we also have a Working Group collaborating with partner agencies and industry on the global vaccine distribution challenge, and to develop further guidance applicable to the current and future pandemics.
20. In concluding now ladies and gentlemen, I wish to re-emphasize that achieving international alignment on the acceptance of test results and vaccination certificates remains our key objective today, and the best way forward to the resumption of global travel and tourism.
21. Thank you.