

**SUMMARY OF DISCUSSIONS OF THE
DIRECTORS GENERAL OF CIVIL AVIATION - EUR/NAT REGIONS
TELECONFERENCE MEETING (EUR/NAT-DGCA/2021-1)**

(24 February 2021)

1. Introduction

1.1 The teleconference meeting of Directors General of Civil Aviation of the ICAO European and North Atlantic (EUR/NAT) Regions (EUR/NAT-DGCA/2021-1) was held on 24 February 2021.

1.2 The main objectives of the meeting were to:

- a) discuss the issues pertaining to the transportation of COVID-19 vaccines by air; and
- b) share experience and lessons learnt.

1.3 96 participants from 30 States, 7 International and Regional Organizations and 3 Aircraft Operators took part in the teleconference. The list of participants is provided in **Appendix A**.

1.4 The Meeting was chaired by the ICAO EUR/NAT DGCA Chairman, Mr. Luis Ribeiro (DG CAA of Portugal). He welcomed all participants and outlined the main objectives of the meeting. He also underlined the importance and timeliness of the meeting to support the global efforts on transportation of vaccines.

1.5 The ICAO Secretary General, Dr. Fang Liu, highlighted in her speech that, in order to cope with the demand for global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines, adapting infrastructure, processes and resources was critical to be able to respond effectively to the huge global logistical challenges. Governments, supply chain partners, humanitarian organizations and pharmaceutical manufacturers needed to prepare themselves collaboratively for a widespread global coordinated response to distribute vaccines to where they were needed in a timely, safe and secure manner. All countries and territories would be impacted, either as a receiver or supplier of vaccines.

1.6 The ICAO EUR/NAT Acting Director, Captain Denis Guindon, emphasized that proper coordination and collaboration amongst all involved entities, governments and industry stakeholders, were crucial to ensure that processes were in place for the transportation of COVID-19 vaccines by air and other modes of transport; allowing an efficient and seamless transportation and delivery from the production site to the receiver.

2. Agenda item 1: Setting the Scene on Vaccine Distribution by Air

2.1 The Meeting was provided with an ICAO presentation that drew attention to the challenges associated with the transportation of COVID-19 vaccines by air. It was emphasised that vaccine delivery was a multifunctional area and therefore coordination with multiple authorities was required.

2.2 The Meeting noted examples of actions undertaken concerning granting the 7th Freedom of traffic rights, in particular by Uzbekistan and LACAC (Latin-American Civil Aviation Commission) member States. It was noted that LACAC established, through a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU), a multilateral agreement granting the 7th Freedom for all cargo flights without route/capacity restrictions in December 2020. The agreement would be in force for a maximum of two years with the intention to facilitate the COVID-19 vaccine transportation. The example of Uzbekistan was a unilateral implementation in June 2020 which granted extra-bilateral rights to foreign carriers for both passengers and cargo.

2.3 It was highlighted that many Regions and States were seeking guidance and were beginning active discussions on this topic. It was noted that a global solution was strongly preferred. Whilst regional solutions represented progress, they could fall short in Regions lacking air cargo capacity. The unilateral approach avoided many of the challenges of multilaterals, however States must move forward together in implementing such policies to realize their benefits.

2.4 The Meeting was presented with the progress of ICAO work on air cargo digitalisation, in particular, support to UNECE (United Nations Economic Commission for Europe) in the *UN Development Account project for the UN COVID-19 Rapid Response: Transport and Trade Connectivity in the Age of Pandemics: Contactless, Seamless and Collaborative UN Solutions*. The relevant project components include reducing physical contacts among the participants of international trade and transport operations (aligned with ICAO Public Health Corridor (PHC) concept); and pursuing collaborative rather than unilateral solutions on transport response to the pandemic.

2.5 It was noted that the project deliverables relevant to ICAO included technical specifications for data exchange for the e-Airwaybill, e-CSD, Dangerous Goods Declaration. This work was coordinated through ICAO EUR/NAT, SAM (South American) and NACC (North American, Central American and Caribbean) Offices as well as IATA (International Air Transport Association), TIACA (The International Air Cargo Association), IPCSA (International Port Community Systems Association) and others on technical work. Updates on the progress of this work would be provided to future EUR/NAT DGCA meetings.

2.6 With regard to operational safety aspects, the Meeting was provided with ICAO updates on the following issues: classification of vaccines as dangerous goods, tracking (data loggers and tracking devices (lithium batteries)) and temperature control (refrigerants (dry ice)).

2.7 The Meeting noted the conclusions that States should help facilitate transport of COVID-19 vaccines without compromising safety. To that end, it was recalled that vaccines were routinely transported, so caution against fixing what was not broken should be exercised.

2.8 Concerning aviation security, the following Conclusion was agreed in order to ensure securing of COVID-19 vaccines through State's supply chain security process:

EUR/NAT-DGCA Conclusion 2021-1/1 - Securing of COVID-19 vaccines through States' supply chain security process

That States are urged to implement the following measures:

- a) identify manufactures, handling and transportation entities and assist them by providing information on Known Consignors/Regulated Agents approval process;
- b) consider granting Known Consignor status urgently to approved production facilities for COVID-19 vaccines, taking into consideration other existing supply chain regimes overseen by other national authorities (e.g. Pharmaceuticals regulators, Customs Authorities); and
- c) until Known Consignor status is granted, consider alternative measures/temporary exemptions from screening of COVID-19 shipments based on national risk assessment.

2.9 Also, with regard to securing of COVID-19 vaccines by applying alternative security procedures, the following Conclusion was agreed:

EUR/NAT-DGCA Conclusion 2021-1/2 - Securing of COVID-19 vaccines by applying alternative security

That States are urged to implement the following measures:

- a) where a secure supply chain process cannot be provided, alternative security procedures such as temporary exemption from screening (strictly limited, based on the NCASP provisions) may be applied in accordance with a State's own risk assessment;

- b) the nature of the consignment should be properly declared (BIOM/COVID-19 vaccine) on the shipping documentation (airway bill) and subject to documentary and physical checks to ensure that the cargo matches the description and shows no signs of tampering;
- c) the consignment needs to be issued with a security status (either in electronic format or in writing) and continually protected against unauthorized interference;
- d) transfer Cargo should be protected from unauthorized interference during all steps of transportation and have a security status, Transit consignments should be clearly indicated in the accompanying airway bill; and.
- e) if signs of tampering are identified, States should apply the security measures stipulated by the NCASP.

2.10 With regard to facilitation, the Meeting was reminded about several essential Annex 9 provisions, in particular those related to establishment of coordinating bodies, such as National Air Transport Facilitation Committees, and Airport Facilitation Committees, or similar coordinating bodies, for the purpose of coordinating facilitation activities between departments, agencies, and other organizations of the State.

2.11 The Meeting noted that NATFC (National Air Transport Facilitation Committees) is a vehicle for coordinating the implementation of the NATFP (National Air Transport Facilitation Programme). The Chair of the NATFC should be a top-management official in the Civil Aviation Authority (CAA). It is recommended to establish coordination between the NCASC (National Civil Aviation Security Committee) and NATFC. The Airport Facilitation Committee is a vehicle for coordinating the implementation of the facilitation programme at the operational level. The Airport Facilitation Committee should coordinate with the NATFC and provide information regarding their challenges and progress.

2.12 In the light of the pandemic and in anticipation of extensive COVID-19 vaccine transport and distribution globally, coordination and cooperation between various stakeholders, including public health authorities at national and airport levels is essential.

2.13 On air navigation related issues, the Meeting noted the coordinated actions by ICAO EUR/NAT and EUROCONTROL to identify critical COVID-19 vaccine distribution flights that may need special air traffic handling and/or priority by inserting STS/ATFMX and RMK/VACCINE in Item 18 of the ICAO Flight Plan.

2.14 Concerning vaccine certificates, the Meeting noted that the leading UN organization working on this topic was the World Health Organization (WHO) that established the Smart Vaccination Certificate Expert Group, with ICAO contributing to this work with a multidisciplinary team of 9 experts. The most recent WHO Emergency Committee meeting on 15 January 2021 agreed that there were no requirements of proof of vaccination for international travel. It was also agreed that an internationally recognized solution for certification of testing results for travel was urgently needed and that a solution enabling the certification of vaccination status for travel was planned to be developed in the short to medium term.

2.15 To that end, ICAO was working on version 2 of the *Manual on Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures* (ICAO Doc 10152) to include: Validation of testing certificates, a new section on vaccination and a new chapter on PHCs. This work was expected to be completed end of March 2021.

3. Agenda item 2: Sharing of experiences and lessons learnt

Presentation by Israel

3.1 Mr. Adam Cutler from the Ministry of Health of Israel and Mr. Eli Alook from the CAA presented their experiences and best practices in the organisation of the immunization programme which started in December 2020. In particular, the Meeting noted with interest information about safety and logistical challenges that were experienced and mitigation actions involving the conduct of safety risk assessments by aircraft operators.

Presentation by the Netherlands/KLM

3.2 Mr. Paul Crombach from Air France/KLM/Martinair Cargo provided the meeting with a major airline's experience and perspective of the delivery of vaccines.

3.3 In particular, the Meeting noted the difficulties experienced in transportation of vaccines, such as:

- a) Last minute information availability
 - i. Volumes and timing very uncertain
 - ii. Daily changes in information
 - iii. No/limited link to pharmaceutical companies
- b) High quantity of Dry-Ice
 - i. Considered dangerous good
 - ii. Maximum amounts allowed on aircraft
 - iii. Dry-ice stock
 - iv. Re-icing
 - v. High volumes only on Cargo aircraft only
- c) High volumes in short times
 - i. Everybody wants to have the vaccine fast
 - ii. Volume on top off regular flows
 - iii. Low availability of air cargo capacity
 - iv. Capacity to receive goods at destination
- d) Temperature compliance
 - i. Very vulnerable to temperature deviations
 - ii. No stability data
- e) Security risks
 - i. Vulnerable to theft and/or tempering
 - ii. High interest by foreign nations
 - iii. Cyber threats

Update from EASA

3.4 Mr. Luc Tytgat, Director of Strategy and Safety Management of EASA, provided an update on EASA's Return to Normal Operations Project.

3.5 It was noted that the *Cargo Tracking Devices Guidelines* (published 2 Dec. 2020) provided guidance and recommendations for evaluation of cargo tracking devices in compliance with the Air Ops Regulation, including technical considerations for authorising the use of these devices, technical considerations covering electromagnetic interferences and batteries and the EASA "help desk". The *EASA Transportation of COVID19 Vaccines Guidelines* (published 17 Dec. 2020) were structured per risk assessment for transporting dry ice in large quantities to cover safety of flight, including ventilation and pressurisation, cargo locations, occupants on board, ground-handling, such as loading, unloading, proper ventilation before entering cargo compartment, CO2 detectors and operational considerations, such as Director General approval, specific training and procedures. The *Guidelines on transportation of cargo in the cabin* were amended to enable transportation of vaccines.

Presentation by the United States Federal Aviation Administration (FAA)

3.6 Mr. Pete Basso, the FAA Vaccine Task Force Co-lead, presented information on the FAA COVID-19 Vaccine Air Transport Team and their actions on coordination with stakeholders to receive information on the movement of vaccine, tracking and facilitating flights that may require special air traffic handling/priority in the United States controlled airspace, and supporting logistics, working domestically and internationally to support the global distribution of COVID-19 vaccines.

Presentation by IATA

3.7 Ms. Andrea Gruber, Head of Special Cargo at IATA, highlighted the key considerations for all stakeholders in managing a global temperature-controlled supply chain in relation to the distribution of the COVID-19 vaccine. A number of examples of lessons learnt since the first vaccine roll out were noted with interest, including those related to capacity, regulations, infrastructure, communications and collaboration.

4. Conclusions and next meeting

4.1 The Meeting was closed by the Chairman and ICAO EUR/NAT Regional Director, who thanked participants for their active contributions.

4.2 The date of the next EUR/NAT DGCA teleconference will be coordinated as soon as possible, tentatively planned in May 2021, focusing on lessons learnt from the current crisis and on the path to recovery of civil aviation.

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**LIST OF APPENDICES****Appendix A— List of Participants**

**APPENDIX A — LIST OF PARTICIPANTS***(Paragraph 1.3 refers)***ALBANIA**

Bujar HAZIZAJ

**ARMENIA**

Zakar HARUTYUNYAN

Susanna DALLAKYAN

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SIKORSKY

Aleksandr AKULENKA

**BELGIUM**

An de LANGE

**CANADA**

Tyler BROOKS

**CYPRUS**

Maria PSILOGENIS

**CZECH REPUBLIC**

Zdenek JELINEK

Marek SKRNA

**FINLAND**

Matti TUPAMAKI

**GEORGIA**

Levan KARANADZE

**HUNGARY**

Erika VARGA

**IRELAND**

Noeleen DISKIN

**ISRAEL**

Joel FELDSCHUH

Eli ALOOK

Adam CUTLER

**ITALY**

Simone RICCI

**LATVIA**

Stanislavs SARKORVKIS

**LITHUANIA**

Jurate PECIUKONYTE

**LUXEMBOURG**

Frank KRAUS

**MOROCCO**

Otman Ait MADANI

Zakaria BELGHAZI

Hicham BENNANI

Mohammed KARARA

Maria EDDARHRI

**NETHERLANDS**

Ingeborg Van GASTEREN

Petrouschka WERTHER

**NORTH MACEDONIA**

Tomislav TUNTEV

**POLAND**

Piotr SAMSON

Michal WITKOWSKI

**PORTUGAL**

Luis Miguel Silva RIBEIRO

**REPUBLIC OF MOLDOVA**

Eugen KOSTETKI

Octavian NICOLAESCU

**ROMANIA**

Nicolae STOICA

**RUSSIAN FEDERATION**Alexey Anatolievich  
NOVGORODOV

Vladimir CHERTOK

Illona S. DEGTYARENKO

Vitaly DEMIDOV

Ekaterina KUZNETSOVA

Pavlina MALININA

Daria SHERLYGINA

**SLOVAKIA**

Richard MELISEK

**SLOVENIA**

Andrej PETELIN

**SPAIN**David LLORENTE  
FERRERAS**SWEDEN**Anne-Marie  
RAGNARSSON**UKRAINE**

Oleksandr BILCHUK

Danylo DAVYDOV

**UNITED STATES**

Heidi AMES

Peter BASSO

Ranee Carr ELTER

Minh FAVILA

Michel GIVENS

Glenn GOSNELL

Mary MASON

Susan NORTHRUP

Ian H. ROSS

Nicole Didyk WELLS

Kristine ADAMS

Andrew KARASICK

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Abdennebi MANAR

**CANSO**

Tanja GROBOTEK

**EASA**

Luc TYTGAT  
Daniela DEFOSSAR

**EUROCONTROL**

Pierre-Alexandre CLAVIER

**IATA**

Andrea GRUBER

**UNITED NATIONS**

Mario APOSTOLOV

**AIRCRAFT OPERATORS****Air France KLM**

Paul CROMBACH  
Edwin BOON

**Royal Air Maroc**

Lahlou EDDAHIR  
Hmani SAID

**Air Serbia**

Irena KRSTIC  
Milena MICIC  
Dejan STOJILJKOVIC

**ICAO SECRETARIAT****HEADQUARTERS**

Fang LIU  
Cortney ROBINSON  
Lynn McGUIGAN  
Yan MA

**ICAO EUR/NAT**

Denis GUINDON  
Elkhan NAHMADOV  
Arnaud DESJARDIN  
Berk BOZKURT  
Blandine FERRIER  
Carolina RAMIREZ  
Christopher KEOHAN  
Cornelia LUDORF  
Inga JGENTI  
Sarantis POULIMENAKOS  
Sven HALLE  
Carolyne OTTIENO  
Catherine DALY  
Isabelle HOFSTETTER  
Leyla SULEYMANOV  
Patricia CUFF

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