

**FACILITATION (FAL) DIVISION — TWELFTH SESSION****Cairo, Egypt, 22 March to 2 April 2004****Agenda Item 1: Developments since the Eleventh Session of the Division****TRAVEL ADVISORIES**

(Presented by the World Tourism Organization)

**1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 Travel Advisories are notices issued by States for their citizens regarding travel to or in foreign countries. Travel Advisories are a means of providing information on visa requirements, local customs, consular access, aviation safety, weather alerts, etc. In recent years Travel Advisories have increasingly also been issued or used to respond to concerns regarding security (for example military conflict, civil unrest, piracy, crime or perceived terrorist threat) or health (for example SARS), providing cautionary recommendations against travel to certain areas by the citizens concerned. In addition to Travel Advisories issued by States, similar notices were issued in 2003 by the World Health Organization in relation to SARS.

1.2 Travel Advisories are issued in a wide array of formats, from Consular Sheets and Travel Alerts to information bulletins and announcements to the travel industry and the media. Increasingly the primary means of distribution is via specific sites on the Internet, maintained by the Governments concerned. Dissemination also occurs through air carriers, travel agents and tour operators, travel guides and computer reservation systems. These intermediaries often add informal travel advice of their own, as in particular do private intelligence organizations (the latter usually on a fee-paying basis). The Internet medium has the advantage of providing direct availability and access to the public (and in some cases a facility for e-mail alerts is provided).

1.3 Following the events of 11 September 2001 and the outbreaks of SARS, the number and scope of cautionary Travel Advisories have proliferated.

**2. THE CHALLENGE**

2.1 There is no doubt that cautionary Travel Advisories have a major negative impact on aviation and tourism flows, as well as on ancillary elements such as insurance. Since the source is Governments, official Travel Advisories have the advantage of being more well-considered and accurate than media reports. However, their very existence has led to a tendency to blow problems out of proportion and often tipped the balance more towards consumer fear of travel rather than consumer protection (for example where a security or health threat is isolated in one part of a country but the perception is developed that travel to the whole country, or even to the neighbouring region, is unsafe).

2.2 There are substantial differences in the advice given by different countries, both in terms of countries and areas specified and in terms of perceived level of risk, which cannot be readily attributed to differences in threat according to nationality. Such differences arise both from the criteria used and from the form and content of presentation; as a consequence many travel industry bodies recommend that travellers review a variety of Travel Advisories before taking their travel decision (and some Government Internet sites assist this process by providing cross-references to certain other Government sites).

2.3 The challenge is to manage Travel Advisories in such a way as to maximize the protection of travellers and minimize the impact on travel, trade and development. While this is an issue in the hands of industrial countries today, the potential flow of travellers *from* developing markets indicates two-way trading considerations.

2.4 While the quality of cautionary Travel Advisories is undoubtedly improving with experience, there are currently a number of continuing concerns, for example:

- a) lack of geographical specificity of the threat;
- b) lack of specificity of the nature of the threat;
- c) lack of consultation with the affected State;
- d) lack of updating/review of the Advisory; and
- e) inconsistencies amongst Advisories issued by different States.

2.5 The World Tourism Organization feels that certain aspects of these issues are appropriate for address by ICAO in the context of the Chicago Convention (notably Article 44 and Annex 9) and the present Divisional Meeting, with its theme of “*Managing Security Challenges to Facilitate Air Transport Operations*”, seems to be a most appropriate forum for evolution of the subject.

2.6 The issue of Travel Advisories is related to the *Global Code of Ethics for Tourism* which was developed by the World Tourism Organization and, having been reviewed by the United Nations Commission on Social Development, was approved by the General Assembly of the Organization in October 1999. The *Global Code* refers, *inter alia*, to mutual understanding and respect between peoples and societies, provides guidance on achieving the benefits of tourism for host countries and communities, and spells out some obligations of stakeholders in tourism development and for the liberty of tourist movements<sup>1</sup>. In this context, the World Tourism Organization is taking a broad view of the whole issue of Travel Advisories and, for example, in view of their critical and substantive economic impact on developing countries in particular, is proposing that they be considered by the World Trade Organization in the context of trade in tourism services.

### 3. ACTION BY THE DIVISION

3.1 The Division is invited to consider adopting a Recommendation regarding Travel Advisories along the following lines:

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<sup>1</sup> The full text of the *Global Code* may be found at [www.world-tourism.org/projects/ethics/principles.html](http://www.world-tourism.org/projects/ethics/principles.html)

**Recommendation XX —**

**THE DIVISION**

*Recognizes* that it is the sovereign right of States to protect their citizens through the issue of Travel Advisories;

*Calls* on States, before issuing or significantly amending any Travel Advisory which cautions against travel to specified countries or regions thereof:

- a) to consult other States, including both those issuing and those identified in Travel Advisories, with a view to mitigating the impact of the Advisory and ensuring to the extent possible consistency in the criteria for issuing the Advisory and consistency in the form and content of the Advisory;
- b) to ensure that the Travel Advisory is specific in terms of both geography and nature of threat, and is expressed in terms which are objective, clear and transparent; and
- c) to place an expiry date on the Travel Advisory and ensure that a mechanism is in place for continuous review of the Travel Advisory prior to that date.

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