



ICAO updates Global Tourism Crisis Committee on latest vaccine and testing developments in air transport

For immediate release

Montréal, 21 January 2021 – Speaking to the 8th Virtual Meeting of the UN World Tourism Organization (UNWTO) Global Tourism Crisis Committee this week, ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu acknowledged that the latest measures to confront the most recent waves of COVID-19 transmission are weighing heavily on global travel and tourism.

She emphasized that there were few signs of near-term relief ahead for travel and tourism markets, given that the world is still faced with limited supplies of vaccines, and insufficient data on the transmission of the virus by persons that have been vaccinated.

Dr. Liu underscored that ICAO is collaborating with States, partner agencies and industry on the global vaccine distribution challenge, and to develop further guidance applicable to current and future pandemics.

The ICAO Secretary General drew her colleagues' attention to ICAO's newly issued manual on *Testing and Cross Border Risk Management Measures*, stressing that the multi-layered health measures it outlines may likely continue to be pursued by states in the medium- to long-term,

“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,” she noted. “Currently there is no agreed-upon means to do so country-to-country on an irrefutable and fraud-resistant basis.”

When and where they are required, ICAO is also recommending that COVID-19 test results and vaccination certificates should be provided in a timely and reliable manner, allowing for the rapid facilitation of travellers while ensuring equity in access.

“Such solutions should also be respectful of privacy and personal data, adaptable to varying infrastructure and conditions, and financially reasonable for all concerned,” Dr. Liu underscored. “A number of different approaches are currently being developed, and it is essential we work to ensure their effective interoperability.”

She further noted that ICAO is collaborating with the WHO, IATA and other travel sector stakeholders to standardize vaccination and testing certificates, thereby promoting mutual recognition leading to the possible reduction of quarantine measures.

The technical solutions for both the vaccination and a testing certificate could be built upon ICAO specifications for Visible Digital Seals (VDS), as already defined in ICAO Doc 9303 on *Machine Readable Travel Documents (MRTDs)*, to ensure globally interoperability and a secure, customer friendly approach.

“VDS-based testing certificates will be secure, trustworthy, privacy-protecting, and interoperable, built on internationally recognized standards and specifications and tailored to the capabilities of existing infrastructure,” she said.

Dr. Liu concluded by underlining that international alignment on the acceptance of test results and vaccination certificates remains a key global objective, and the best way forward to the resumption of global travel and tourism.



Resources for Editors

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About ICAO

A specialized agency of the United Nations, ICAO was created by governments in 1944 to support their diplomacy on international air transport matters. Since that time, countries have adopted over 12,000 standards and practices through ICAO which help to align their national regulations relevant to aviation safety, security, efficiency, capacity and environmental protection, enabling a truly global network to be realized. ICAO forums also provide opportunities for advice and advocacy to be shared with government decision-makers by industry groups, civil society NGOs, and other officially-recognized air transport stakeholders.

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