



ICAO Council approves new pandemic response and recovery measures

For immediate release

Montréal, 12 March 2021 – The ICAO Council approved six new COVID-19 recommendations today, and amended two others, as countries continue to address latest information and cooperate to optimize the role of international air transport in global pandemic recovery and ensure the speedy resumption of air travel.

The new and amended recommendations and updated guidelines are contained in the *High-Level Cover Document* and *'Take-off' Guidelines* issued by the [Council's Aviation Recovery Task Force \(CART\)](#), established shortly after the pandemic was identified by the World Health Organization (WHO).

"Following the emergence of new virus variants, the vaccine rollouts, and other innovations to battle COVID-19, the work of CART has targeted specific issues related to testing and vaccination of passengers as part of a State's multilayer risk management strategy with the ultimate objective of restoring public confidence in air travel and getting passengers to fly again. After the 70% decrease in air traffic, international air transport can now see the light at the end of the tunnel thanks also to these new recommendations and guidelines" commented ICAO Council President Salvatore Sciacchitano.

"The Council has also taken into account the latest position of the WHO, which specifies that proof of COVID-19 vaccination should not be made a condition for international travel," he noted.

Specific areas relating to the transport of vaccines on commercial aircraft have been newly addressed by the CART, requiring attention and action on behalf of pharmaceutical manufacturers, airline and airport operators, and national aviation regulators. These include addenda to the ICAO [Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air](#) to help better ensure that vaccines are safely handled, transported, and accepted to promote their rapid and effective global distribution.

"The CART's multi-layer risk management strategy has proven to be very helpful. Phase III highlights the interoperability of testing protocols and proof-of-results certification, vaccination for crew and passengers, as well as on appropriate masks for air travel. In addition, guidance on Public Health Corridors has been updated to facilitate the establishment of such arrangements on a bilateral or multilateral level," commented CART Chairperson Mr. Estanislao Esono Anguesomo of Equatorial Guinea.

Air crew were also the focus of new recommendations pertaining to regulatory alleviations and the continuous need of service providers and air transport essential personnel, including pilots and controllers, to maintain the validity of their certificates, licenses, and other professional accreditations and approvals.

The ICAO [Manual on Testing and Cross-Border Risk Management Measures](#), first issued last November, has also been updated during CART Phase III to provide more detailed guidance on risk management and Public Health Corridors, information on recent scientific evidence regarding COVID-19 testing, as well as a new section on vaccination and its interdependencies with other tools available to States as part of their multilayer risk management framework. This work

benefitted from the close collaboration of ICAO's [Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation](#) and of the WHO and industry groups.

Recognizing that the COVID-19 crisis has required countries to confront difficult trade-offs associated with health, economic, and social challenges, and that public health still remains the overriding priority, the Council endorsed the CART's call that countries adequately consider aviation's crucial role in the fight against the pandemic when defining related national policy and spending priorities.

"As these new guidelines emphasize, global supply chains, emergency and humanitarian response, and the swift distribution of vaccines to needful populations everywhere rely fundamentally on air transport," highlighted President Sciacchitano. "In light of aviation's important role as an enabler and multiplier of economic activity, national authorities are being called upon to ensure that the guidance presented here is fully considered by all relevant decision-makers."

In welcoming the Phase III approval by Council, ICAO Secretary General Dr. Fang Liu appreciated the recognition by States of the critical importance of air transport to current global priorities, in addition to "the tremendous efforts on behalf of the ICAO Secretariat for coordinating the expert advice and rapid updates the CART Phase III process has required."

Dr. Liu also drew attention to the continuing role being played by ICAO in support of more effective and aligned regional and international pandemic cooperation in support of the CART objectives, and emphasized that current roadmaps and coordination mechanisms were being amended to adjust to the Phase III changes.

The Council also agreed to convene a high-level conference with Ministerial participation in October to muster the political will of States and obtain commitment towards a full recovery of international air transport.

New and revised CART Phase II Guidance

Recommendation 12 (Revised)

Member States should plan to put in place the necessary measures to mitigate risks associated with prolonged regulatory alleviations, and to avoid extending alleviations (both core and extended COVID-19 Contingency Related Differences (CCRDs)) beyond 31 March 2021. States that are in need of alternative actions to enable service providers and personnel to maintain the validity of their certificates, licenses, and other approvals during the COVID-19 pandemic should use the Targeted Exemptions (TE) system from 1 April 2021. In addition, States are encouraged to facilitate cross-border access to medical and training facilities, including flight simulation training devices used for flight crew (national and foreign) and Air Traffic Controllers (ATCOs) to maintain their certifications, recency of experience, and proficiency.

Recommendation 14 (Revised)

States considering the formation of a Public Health Corridor (PHC) should actively share information with each other to implement PHCs in a harmonized manner. To facilitate the implementation, the ICAO Implementation Package (iPack) on establishing a PHC is available to States, in addition to PHC-specific tools published on the ICAO website and the App providing a template PHC arrangement between States.

Recommendation 15

Member States are urged to implement Addenda Nos. 1 and 2 to the ICAO Technical Instructions for the Safe Transport of Dangerous Goods by Air (Doc 9284) without delay in order to facilitate the transport of COVID-19 vaccines and to permit certain dangerous goods to be carried on board

aircraft to provide for a safe, sanitary operating environment for passengers and crew. If any State wishes to be more restrictive, they are reminded of their obligation to file a State variation to the Technical Instructions.

Recommendation 16

Member States are encouraged to consider the temporary lifting of restrictions to air cargo operations, including but not limited to granting extra-bilateral rights, in particular for all-cargo services, to foreign airlines to facilitate the transportation of essential goods, supplies and COVID-19 vaccines.

Recommendation 17

Member States should implement testing certificates based on the protocol, minimum dataset and implementation approaches outlined in the ICAO Manual on Testing and Cross-Border Risk Management Measures (Doc 10152) to facilitate air travel. States are encouraged to request evidence of testing that is secure, trustworthy, verifiable, convenient to use, compliant with data protection legislation and internationally/globally interoperable. Existing solutions should be considered and could incorporate a visible digital seal. This may be applicable to vaccination certificates.

Recommendation 18

Member States should facilitate access for air crew to vaccination as quickly as possible within the World Health Organization (WHO) Strategic Advisory Group of Experts on Immunization (SAGE) Stage III recommendations.

Recommendation 19

Vaccination should not be a prerequisite for international travel. At such time as evidence shows that vaccinated persons would not transmit the SARS-CoV-2 virus or would present a reduced risk of transmitting the virus, Member States may exempt such individuals from testing and/or quarantine measures, in accordance with a State's accepted risk threshold, national framework, the COVID-19 situation and the multilayered risk mitigation framework described in the Take-off: Guidance for Air Travel through the COVID-19 Public Health Crisis.

Recommendation 20

Member States should ensure that ICAO's CART guidance is taken into consideration by the wider State administration in the decision-making processes on national recovery planning.



Resources for Editors

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.

[ICAO's COVID-19 Portal](#)
[The ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce](#)

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