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**Subject:** Long-term management of COVID-19 and building resilience for future public health emergencies in the aviation sector

**Action required:** a) implement WHO temporary recommendations and guidance material; b) coordinate and communicate with the appropriate national authorities to open borders or alternatively establish public health corridors; c) continue to lift COVID-19 international travel related health measures appropriately; and d) support the establishment of a long-term strategy for COVID-19 management

Sir/Madam,

1. I have the honour to bring to your attention updated recommendations on the management of COVID-19 following the World Health Organization (WHO) announcement of 5 May 2023 that it no longer constitutes a public health emergency of international concern (PHEIC).

2. While the PHEIC has been terminated based on decreased mortality and increased immunity, together with better access to diagnostics, vaccination and therapeutics, it is important to note that the global risk assessment still remains high due to remaining uncertainties regarding the potential evolution of SARS-CoV-2.

3. COVID-19 is an ongoing health issue, with some Member States experiencing challenges in their healthcare systems to manage patients due to low levels of population immunity, availability of vaccines and therapeutics, pandemic fatigue, misinformation and limited resources.

4. As the pandemic is transitioning from the acute phase to a more sub-acute or chronic phase, Member States are urged to continue to implement the Temporary Recommendations issued by the WHO Director-General in the Statement of the fifteenth meeting of the International Health Regulations (2005) Emergency Committee regarding the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic ([Statement on the fifteenth meeting of the IHR \(2005\) Emergency Committee on the COVID-19 pandemic \(who.int\)](#)) and follow the guidance for transitioning to long-term management of COVID-19 as published in the WHO

2023-2025 COVID-19 Strategic Preparedness and Response Plan ([From emergency response to long-term COVID-19 disease management: sustaining gains made during the COVID-19 pandemic \(who.int\)](#)).

5. In the aviation sector, and in accordance with the WHO Temporary Recommendations, Member States and aviation industry stakeholders are urged to:

- a) sustain the momentum, continue to enhance capacity and implement lessons learned from the pandemic in our collective objective to strengthen the aviation industry's resilience to future public health emergencies;
- b) continue to lift COVID-19 international travel related health measures appropriately, in consultation with national public health authorities and based on risk assessments, by continuing to apply the following principles:
  - coordinating and communicating with the appropriate national authorities through national facilitation committees and/or other existing national frameworks;
  - using the multilayer risk-based approach to mitigate the transmission of the disease;
  - recording and sharing data with the WHO and other States;
  - communicating any remaining risk mitigation measures to all relevant stakeholders;
  - regularly reviewing and updating health measures by monitoring the information on the relevant International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and WHO platforms;
- c) encourage continued COVID-19 vaccination for aviation transport workers in accordance with WHO guidelines, building on early and widespread vaccination of the population of aviation personnel as a whole;
- d) removing any requirement for proof of vaccination against COVID-19 as a prerequisite for international travel where it is still in effect;
- e) open borders that are still closed, or alternatively, continue to explore bilateral or multilateral Public Health Corridor (PHC) Arrangements as a preferable and more suitable alternative to border closure;
- f) actively participate in the ICAO Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) programme working groups; and
- g) collaborate with public health authorities in surveillance activities such as random COVID-19 testing and assisting with aircraft wastewater surveillance.

6. ICAO is working actively with WHO to finalize the work plan supplementing the Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) between WHO and ICAO, which includes work on the Preparedness and Resilience for Emerging Threats (PRET) Initiative that will help mitigate the impact of future health emergencies.

7. ICAO is also currently updating the ICAO *Manual on COVID-19 Cross-Border Risk Management* (Doc 10152) to provide guidance to enable an appropriate transition to the chronic phase of

COVID-19 management and preparing guidance to manage the mental health effects and long-term side effects of COVID known as Post COVID Condition (PCC), in order to support aviation personnel and maintain aviation safety.

8. States are urged to follow and implement this guidance in coordination with ICAO Regional Offices according to their specific needs and circumstances, noting the importance of a global coordinated approach to transition from an emergency response to long-term management of COVID-19, thereby facilitating the recovery of international travel, trade, tourism and the global economy, and preparing the aviation sector for any future public health emergencies.

9. ICAO anticipates a robust recovery in air passenger demand throughout 2023. It is forecasted that the quarterly growth rate will reach around 3% above the levels seen in 2019 by the end of the year. This prediction builds upon the substantial recovery already witnessed in 2022 when passenger numbers and revenues rose to an estimated 74% and 68% of pre-pandemic levels, respectively. Concurrently, the number of aircraft in service rebounded to 75% of pre-pandemic levels, reflecting a resurgence in demand. Despite a potential deceleration in air cargo growth in 2023, the long-term projection remains robust. After three years of losses, most airlines are projected to return to profitability by the end of 2023. For further information, please contact: [datb@icao.int](mailto:datb@icao.int).

10. In conclusion, to maintain air connectivity and to build resilience for future public health emergencies in the aviation sector, ICAO urges States to implement Resolution A41-11: *Declaration on air transport facilitation affirming global commitment to enable the safe and efficient recovery of aviation from the COVID-19 pandemic, and to make aviation more resilient in the future* and Resolution A 41-12: *Maintaining health and sustaining safe international air transport during public health emergencies affecting air travel*.

Accept, Sir/Madam, the assurances of my highest consideration.

Juan Carlos Salazar  
Secretary General