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North American, Central American and Caribbean Office

WORKING PAPER

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**Tenth North American, Central American and Caribbean Directors of Civil Aviation Meeting  
(NACC/DCA/10)**

Martinique, France, 21 to 23 June 2022

**Agenda Item 6: NAM/CAR Regional Aviation Security/Facilitation Implementation**

**INNOVATIVE, PRACTICAL, INTEROPERABLE SOLUTIONS FOR TRAVEL ACCEPTANCE**

(Presented by International Air Transport Association)

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This paper recommends critical actions needed to ensure the return of international air travel to pre-pandemic levels, with consistent and sustainable measures that can be used across the globe. This requires strong leadership to promote risk-based strategies, promote mutual recognition of health (vaccine, testing and immunity) status, and ensure efficient and practical processes for the clearance of travellers from all countries. In the short term, processes and solutions are needed that account for paper certificates for testing, vaccination and proof of immunity after recovery, as well as a range of automated digital solutions that have been implemented. As passenger numbers increase, the expedient checking of such documentation will be critical for the continued recovery and growth of the industry. For the longer term, standardized digital solutions are needed that are both secure and practical, and are interoperable with health credentials issued by States.

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| <b>Action:</b>               | States to consider adopting practical, flexible process and solutions for travel acceptance to facilitate the recovery of international passenger travel.  |
| <i>Strategic Objectives:</i> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Safety</li><li>• Air Navigation Capacity and Efficiency</li><li>• Security &amp; Facilitation</li><li>• Economic Development of Air Transport</li><li>• Environmental Protection</li></ul> |

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

1.1 By definition, the aim of facilitation is to ensure the efficient movement of passengers, crew and goods across borders. Many of the elements of facilitation, such as efficient, automated clearances and inspection of passengers' credentials, are critical for the recovery and future growth of the industry.

1.2 ACI, CANSO, IATA, IBAC, ICCAIA and IFALPA recognize the unique situation that the COVID-19 pandemic has brought and commend the good work of ICAO Council Aviation Recovery Taskforce (CART), Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) and the Facilitation Panel working towards a safe industry for passengers, crew and staff.

1.3 States took action to limit the spread of COVID-19 and reduce the risk of translocation, including through the implementation of new border restrictions, COVID-19 testing requirements and quarantines. In order to remove these restrictions and requirements, and facilitate the movement of people across borders, the risk of the spread of COVID-19 needs to be effectively managed.

1.4 There is strong evidence to demonstrate that vaccination protects travellers from serious illness and death (transmission) and carries a low risk of introducing the virus into destination countries (translocation). Data modelling also demonstrates that, without taking vaccination into account, the risk of virus transmission and translocation can be significantly reduced by adopting data-driven screening and protection measures.

1.5 The full and sustained reopening of travel requires strong leadership to promote science and risk-based strategies, facilitate data driven screening, promote mutual recognition of health (vaccine, testing or immunity) status, and ensure efficient and practical processes for the clearance of travellers from all countries.

1.6 As air operations resume and increasing number of passengers are vaccinated or naturally immunized, the risk of COVID-19 spread is more easily mitigated and it will continue to be managed, as will other health related issues.

## **2. DISCUSSION**

2.1 There is a clear requirement from States to be able to receive more information about passenger health related status before they cross their borders (vaccination status, test results, immunity after recovery and contact tracing).

2.2 The implementation of new systems and the introduction of new processes can be costly and disruptive. There is, therefore, a critical, urgent and ongoing need for practical-, short- and medium-term solutions, that are interoperable and mutually recognized, and cater for those who have not implemented digital solutions. Such solutions should endure and be fit for purpose in future health crisis situations.

2.3 For the short term, processes will be needed that account for the many countries that have issued paper certificates for testing, vaccination and immunity after recovery. As passenger numbers start to increase, the expedient checking of such documentation will be critical for the recovery of the industry, especially avoiding the creation of crowds at airports which may be counterproductive to recovery efforts.

2.4 It is also critical to develop options for passengers to self-declare their status and share it in advance of their journey directly with the concerned authorities. Such tools should aim at preventing fraud, ensuring the integrity of the data and respecting the confidentiality of the information. ICAO can play a key role in promoting the interoperability of these tools to facilitate the travel of passengers through multiple countries.

2.5 We urge ICAO to continue to work closely with States to encourage the mutual acceptance of vaccination and testing providers, certificates and testing results, to enable international travel to efficiently restart as a complete, interconnected system.

2.6 It is recognized that it will be difficult to prevent fraud while so many different forms of certification exist, however, it is for States to deter fraud by the development and application of strong and enforceable measures against the use of forged documentation.

2.7 Digital solutions clearly come with cybersecurity and privacy concerns, and recognized solutions should have safeguards built in. However, systems must be sufficiently accessible and easy to adopt for all States, as well as accessible for industry to enable pre-departure checking of health status.

2.8 While both paper and digital solutions co-exist, it will be critical to provide sufficient resources at borders to enable the efficient clearance of passengers. The industry would encourage improved service standards required by States for clearance processes including queue time. This will also encourage the adoption of automated solutions, the avoidance of double handling and checks on arrival that duplicate those already made on departure.

2.9 As health requirements continue to evolve, States should review requirements to ensure that they are removed or simplified when possible and practical. We also encourage States to ensure that changes are clearly communicated, with sufficient notice for operators to implement the changes and message passengers in a timely manner.

2.10 In the long term, we fully support a blueprint towards digital solutions and standards, which may include the use by States of digital seals or public key directories to verify the authenticity of health credentials and travel documentation. The industry is ready to assist with the development of such a blueprint and the examination of all options that will facilitate travel.

2.11 To build a more resilient aviation system, we will need fully integrated, touchless systems that can perform inspections for customs, immigration and health purposes, and that are accessible to all stakeholders including passengers, airlines, airports and authorities. Systems will need to be flexible and extensible as new requirements emerge and take into account security and facilitation imperatives. The systems being designed and built now will be critical for future resilience and growth of the industry.

### **3. CONCLUSION**

3.1 To fulfil State requirements for managing the risk from COVID-19, there is an urgent need for a collaborative global approach toward a range of acceptable methods of communicating health data to authorities, to expedite passenger travel and enable the recovery of aviation from the COVID-19 crisis. In the short term, practical, interoperable, mutually accepted solutions are required, that cater for both paper and digital records.

3.2 In the long term, touchless, digital solutions and standards that enable passengers to pre-clear their health status and travel credentials in a secure, automated manner will simplify governments' checks, increase passengers experience and place the industry in good stead for future crises.

3.3 Considering the above, this meeting is invited to encourage States to:

a) take a collaborative approach towards widespread adoption of practical, flexible processes and solutions for travel acceptance to facilitate the recovery of international passenger travel;

That ICAO

b) encourages the mutual recognition of vaccination and testing requirements and certificates between States when used for cross-border travel, taking into account the likelihood of many formats in the short to medium term; and

c) continues its work towards interoperable long-term solutions that use digital identity and travel credentials established by States, taking into account existing solutions and global limitations.