

Govts urged to focus on 'high-risk travellers', not 'high-risk countries'

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London: The World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC) is calling for governments to abandon the concept of COVID-19 'high-risk countries' and instead focus on how individual 'high-risk travelers' are treated at borders. Entire populations are not infected, and should not all be labeled as 'high-risk', it said.

WTTC, which represents the global Travel and Tourism private sector, is urging governments around the world to shift their focus from whole countries, towards individual travelers.

Instead, WTTC says governments around the world should redefine their whole approach to risk assessment, to revive international business and leisure travel. Combined with a common international consensus on the metrics used to assess risk and a laser-like focus on a cost-effective, comprehensive, and rapid departure and arrival testing scheme for all travellers, could pave the way forward for the meaningful return of the travel.

It would also ensure only those affected are forced to isolate, while travellers who test negative can continue to enjoy safe travels through observing hygiene protocols and mask-wearing.

Gloria Guevara, President, and CEO, WTTC, said, "Risk-based on entire countries is neither effective nor productive. Redefining risk towards individual travellers

instead will be key for unlocking the door to the return of safe international travel. We need to learn from past experiences and crises such as 9-11."

"We cannot continue labelling entire countries as 'high-risk' which assumes everyone is infected. While the UK is currently seeing high levels of infections, clearly not all Britons are infected; the same goes for all Americans, Spaniards, or the French."

"The reality is much more complex. Not only does it stigmatise an entire nation, but it also halts travel and mobility when many people who test negative on departure and arrival could safely travel without exporting the virus."

"We have to recognise this reality and redefine the risk to focus on 'high-risk' individuals. We firmly believe implementing a comprehensive testing regime and the use of technology is the only practical way to restore international travel securely. Furthermore, a comprehensive testing programme will be less expensive than the economic cost brought on by blanket quarantines and lockdowns."

"This refocus would avoid exporting the virus and enable the free movement of travellers, while still observing enhanced hygiene protocols such as mask-wearing and social distancing."

"We must learn to live with the virus, as it will take time for the global population to be vaccinated. This is why WTTC has long advocated introducing a comprehensive and cost-effective test on departure and arrival for all international travellers, as a way of preventing those carrying the virus from spreading it."

"As always, there is a crucial balance to be struck between the priority on public health with the need to sustain economic activity. As well ensuring people are safe and healthy, we also need to secure the health of the global economy - and revive the 174 million Travel and Tourism jobs affected by this devastating pandemic."

According to [WTTC's 2019 Economic Impact Report](#), Travel and Tourism contributed USD 8.9 trillion, or 10.3 percent towards the world's GDP. It accounted for one in 10 global jobs, giving employment to 330 million people through the Travel and Tourism sector.