

IATA calls for global certification programme to reopen travel

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Montreal: The International Air Transport Association (IATA) has called on governments to partner with the air transport industry to devise plans to safely re-link people, businesses and economies when the Covid-19 epidemiological situation permits.

A priority for this critical cooperation is an acceleration of the establishment of global standards for vaccination and testing certification.

“We can see the light at the end of the tunnel as vaccination programs roll out.

“Turning this vision into a safe and orderly re-start will require careful planning and coordination by governments and industry.

“This will be challenging as the priority for the weeks and months ahead will be containing the spread of new variants.

“But even as the crisis deepens, it is important to prepare the way for a resumption of flights when the epidemiological situation permits,” said Alexandre de Juniac, [IATA](#) chief executive.

“Understanding government policy benchmarks and agreeing on the global standards needed to support a return to normality in travel will ensure that air transport is well-prepared and does not become a meaningful vector for reimportation. Airlines are ready to support governments in this task.”

When governments do turn their attention to re-establishing global air connectivity, IATA is ready to partner with them to facilitate a globally consistent, efficient and effective approach, the body said.

IATA said some governments were already evolving principles in their testing/vaccination programs that could form the foundation for global harmonization.

These include:

Vaccinations: Most governments are pursuing a vaccination strategy that seeks to protect their health care workers and most vulnerable populations first. IATA supports re-opening borders to travel when this has been achieved, as the greatest risks will have been mitigated.

Vaccinated individuals: The Greek government last week proposed that vaccinated individuals should be immediately exempted from travel restrictions, including quarantine. IATA supports moves by governments, including Poland, Latvia, Lebanon and Seychelles, to implement this exemption.

Testing: Many governments are implementing testing regimes to facilitate travel, which IATA supports. Germany and the US, for example, are taking advantage of the rapid improvement in testing technologies to accept PCR and antigen testing to safely manage the risks of travel. While rapid antigen tests are preferred for their speed and cost advantages, it is clear that PCR testing will play a role as many governments are requiring tests within a 48- to 72-hour window prior to travel.

Crew: [The ICAO-CART guidance](#) recommends that crew be exempted from testing processes and restrictions that are designed for passengers. IATA supports crew health management protocols which include, for example, regular testing and health checks at home bases, along with strict guidelines limiting interaction with the local community during crew layovers. This enables airlines to manage the risks of Covid-19 while maintaining operational viability.

Multi-layered bio-safety measures: The ICAO recommendations for multi-layered bio-safety measures (including mask-wearing) are being globally implemented. IATA supports such measures remaining fully in place for all travellers until such time as the epidemiological situation allows for relaxation.

There are plenty of moving parts in the equation. The number of people vaccinated, and the availability of testing are key among them.

“Airlines have adapted their operations in order to maintain cargo operations and some passenger services while complying with the numerous and uncoordinated restrictions imposed.

“Building on this experience they can help governments with their preparations for

eventually safely re-establishing global connectivity for their people, businesses and economies,” said de Juniac.