



## APTRA JOINS WITH TRAVEL AND TOURISM ASSOCIATIONS ACROSS APAC TO AMPLIFY COLLECTIVE VOICE TO GOVERNMENTS

**Singapore 2 December 2020** Building on its September 2020 advocacy campaign that urged government harmonisation in testing protocols for travellers – the first campaign of its kind in the region – APTRA is now accelerating and amplifying its support for travel retail, by joining forces with other industry associations in travel and tourism sectors across Asia Pacific.

The objective of the group is to increase the power of the collective voice across several aspects of travel in APAC, initially targeting agreement from governments to urgently adopt the ICAO risk assessment and testing framework in lieu of quarantine.

It is estimated that, globally, 46 million\* jobs are now at risk because of the closure of international borders and travel restrictions imposed because of this crisis. The air transport sector accounts for 3.1% of Asia Pacific GDP and supports nearly 50 million jobs.

As the collective voice representing the extended ecosystem of tourism, airline, airport and travel retail sectors in the Asia Pacific region, the group, comprising PATA – Pacific Asia Travel Association, AAPA – Association of Asia Pacific Airlines, ACI, IATA and APTRA – has jointly written an open letter to governments across the region, calling on ministers to fully implement the guidance and recommendations in ICAO's Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures Manual. The manual is a risk-based assessment tool for programmes that could reduce quarantine measures, which are viewed as the primary disincentive to international travel.

The open letter directly addresses the multiple ministries involved in managing different aspects of the crisis – reaching ministers of health, transport, tourism, interior and foreign affairs. The group maintains that a cross-departmental approach is urgently required to deliver regional coordination mechanisms to overcome the unprecedented damage to the travel and tourism sectors. This includes the widespread loss of livelihoods in many communities across the region. It is calling on governments for a calibrated, multilayer risk strategy that includes testing of passengers and the potential alleviation of quarantines for travellers at their destinations.

**Sunil Tuli, President of APTRA comments. “The number of jobs identified at risk in travel and tourism in APAC is a stark reminder of the increasingly urgent need to *safely* re-open borders and to re-establish global connectivity. Travel and tourism is a complex, inter-dependent ecosystem and it’s an extremely important industry in Asia Pacific. One that has been instrumental over recent decades in enhancing quality of life for many communities with the acceleration of literacy, education, career advancement and helping alleviate poverty, especially in developing countries. Although APTRA has the needs of our members front and central to our mission, we also recognise the issues facing the communities around us and our inter-dependency with other aspects of travel and tourism. We believe it is essential for us as a trade association to look beyond our own backyard in travel retail and to amplify the power of the collective voice by joining forces with other relevant associations.”**

Developed by aviation health experts led by ICAO in conjunction with the United States’ Center for Disease Control and Prevention, the European Centre for Prevention and Disease Control and the World Health Organization, the ICAO Manual provides an internationally-agreed framework for states to mitigate the risk of transmissions with COVID-19 testing. This is recommended within a

multi-layer risk management strategy to reduce or eliminate quarantines, whenever justified by an accurate risk-assessment.

Notably, the Manual provides clear guidance on how to limit the use of quarantine, depending on the risk tolerance estimated by each country and on the estimated risk of translocation of COVID-19 from one State to another:

“3.5.2 In applying the risk assessment, States should consider their risk tolerance and the risks posed by the travel, and how different mitigation measures may reduce that risk. If travel is from an area of low prevalence to one of high prevalence, then the value of quarantine as a measure may be diminished. In situations where travel is between two countries with similar levels of transmission in the community, any travellers who had been COVID-19 tested negative, meeting the performance-based criteria described in Section 3.3.2, upon departure would be of lower statistical risk than the non-tested members of the surrounding communities in either country. Travellers that have been COVID-19 tested negative could be subjected to no more restrictions than the others in the community at destination.

3.5.3 While quarantine can have the highest impact when travel is from an area of high community transmission to an area of low community transmission, the introduction of testing into the measures applied could potentially be used to reduce the risk of translocation and the duration of quarantine. There is evidence to show that tests reduce the risk of an undetected positive case by some degree, and that a second test (in combination with a period of quarantine) further reduces that risk.”

As States in the Asia-Pacific region begin taking cautious steps towards easing travel restrictions, consistency and harmonisation in cross-border travel protocols are key to the restoration of public confidence and a sustained and effective recovery of the air transport and tourism sectors.

ICAO’s recommendation on the replacement of quarantine with testing for travel between low risk locations is exemplified by the forthcoming quarantine-free air travel bubble between Hong Kong and Singapore. This first-of-a-kind bilateral arrangement, which is open to all types of travellers, is a leading example of a risk-based approach that dynamically balances the risk of virus transmission with the need to re-establish international travel based on a mutually-agreed approach to testing and multi-layered mitigation measures for the safety of travellers and local communities.

The group of associations urges resolute action by governments working with other States in the Asia-Pacific region and the industry to implement globally-harmonized cross-border measures, including a systematic approach to COVID-19 testing that will ensure safe, smooth and sustainable air transport, as well as quicken the pace of the restart of travel and tourism.

**ENDS**

**\* Source:** The Air Transport Action Group (ATAG)

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#### **About APTRA**

The Asia Pacific Travel Retail Association (APTRA) is a membership organisation whose vision is to represent all members of the association and to strengthen, nurture & protect the duty free and travel retail industry in the Asia Pacific region. APTRA's membership comprises landlords, retailers and brands, which is unique and adds richness to the association's work. APTRA's territory spans over 45 countries in Asia Pacific.