



Open Letter to Asia-Pacific Ministers of Health, Transport, Tourism, Interior, and Foreign Affairs to Adopt ICAO Risk Assessment and Testing Framework in lieu of quarantine

As the collective voice representing the tourism, airline, airport and the travel retail sectors in the Asia-Pacific region, we respectfully call upon your Ministry/Authority to fully implement the guidance and recommendations contained in ICAO's *Testing and Cross-border Risk Management Measures Manual (Doc 10152)* ("the Manual"), a risk-based assessment tool for programmes that could reduce quarantine measures, which are viewed as the primary disincentive to international travel.

The Air Transport Action Group (ATAG) estimates 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 which accounts for 3.1% of Asia-Pacific GDP and supports nearly 50 million jobs, urgently needs regional coordination mechanisms to overcome the unprecedented damage to the travel and tourism sectors, including the widespread loss of livelihoods in many communities across the region.

These alarming figures serve as a stark reminder to the urgency of safely re-opening borders and re-establishing global connectivity through a calibrated multilayer risk strategy that includes testing of passengers and the potential alleviation of quarantines for travellers at their destinations.

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

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 as part of a multilayer 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.”

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.

We respectfully urge resolute action by your Government 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.



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