# Vaccines and Air Travel
## Position Paper

### Background

In addition to its serious impact on public health, COVID-19 has caused unprecedented disruption to the global economy and society, destroying jobs and devastating livelihoods around the world. Aviation and the industries that air travel supports have been particularly badly affected. At the end of 2020, 46 million jobs supported by air travel have been lost or are at risk and as much as $1.8 trillion in GDP supported by air transport could be lost.

The rapid progress in developing, trialing and approving vaccines offers hope of an end to the worst of the damage wrought by the pandemic, the global distribution of vaccines represents a huge logistical challenge in which air transport will play a fundamental role.

This position paper sets out key considerations about the role of vaccination in the recovery of international travel.

### Waiting for vaccine before reopening borders not an option

While the first countries have approved a limited number of vaccines and started to vaccinate their populations, widespread global vaccine roll-out is likely to take at least 12-24 months. This assessment is based on the production rates announced by the vaccine manufacturers, the geographic distribution of advance market commitments and purchase orders and the likely approach to prioritization of different groups within countries.

Given the critical state of the airline industry, safely reopening borders using COVID-testing as a bridge solution to relax quarantine and other border restrictions is critical to ensure airline survival, along with the survival of the thousands of businesses and millions of jobs that depend on international air travel.

At the same time, as vaccination rolls out, Governments should put procedures in place to ensure that travelers who have been vaccinated should not need to undergo COVID testing.

### Governments should remove restrictions as soon as vulnerable groups vaccinated

As vaccination rolls out to elderly populations and other clinically vulnerable groups, the health impacts of COVID-19 will reduce greatly. The health risks to the population and pressures on the healthcare system will largely recede facilitating a broad reopening of economies and a relaxation of restrictions and preventive measures.

In the context of international travel, given the reduced impact of any imported cases, countries where vulnerable groups have been vaccinated should no longer require COVID-19 testing. Any residual quarantine measures should immediately be relaxed at this stage.

While IATA expects that a significant majority of international travelers will be willing to get vaccinated, COVID vaccination should not be a mandatory government requirement for international travel. As the risks of COVID to the local population reduce, imposing requirements on international travelers is not justified. Mandating

vaccination would discriminate against those individuals who are not able to get vaccinated due to medical reasons or who are unwilling to do so due to ethical or other concerns. Moreover, such a policy would also risk discriminating against those markets where vaccines may take longer to become widely available. As a general principle, travelers to a country should not be subject to stricter conditions than the measures applying for residents.

## Governments should prioritize aviation for access to vaccines

Given the importance of air transport in distribution of vaccines, governments should prioritize aviation workers for access to vaccination once the elderly, vulnerable groups and health workers have been vaccinated. This position is set out in more detail in IATA's Position Paper on Vaccination and Aviation Workers [Insert link]

IATA's call to government is aligned with the World Health Organization's Strategic Advisory Group of Experts (SAGE) on Immunization proposed Roadmap for Prioritizing Uses of COVID-19 Vaccines. This outlines priority populations for vaccination based on epidemiologic setting and vaccine supply scenarios. Within this framework, SAGE has included transportation workers alongside other groups of essential and front-line workers such as, for example, police.

## Governments and industry need to work together on a blueprint for implementation:

While COVID vaccines offer the hope of a return to pre-pandemic normality, for international travel it is important there is a globally consistent and standardized approach to minimize complexity. This is particularly critical with regard to equivalent treatment of different vaccines and mutual recognition and acceptance of vaccination certificates. ICAO, WHO and CAPSCA should lead on ensuring harmonization in these areas.

In parallel, there is a clear need for a roadmap for managing the implementation of vaccination, including managing the roll-out period where countries will be moving at different speeds depending on their access to vaccine supplies and during which it is expected that testing and vaccination will overlap. This roadmap should set out guidance and trigger points for managing the removal of testing and other measures.

As more communities around the world get access to vaccination, governments and industry should develop a blueprint for post- COVID- air travel with the removal of border restrictions and a return to a full passenger experience during 2021.