



ASSEMBLY — 40TH SESSION

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Agenda Item 26: Other high-level policy issues to be considered by the Executive Committee

IATA VIEWS ON RESPONSE TO PANDEMICS AND PUBLIC HEALTH EVENTS

(Presented by the International Air Transport Association (IATA))

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

IATA recognizes the excellent work undertaken by the World Health Organization (WHO) in responding to public health events of international concern, such as pandemics. IATA also recognizes the importance of aviation in such events, not only as a potential means of accelerating the spread of infectious disease from one country to another, but also in responding to the outbreaks in allowing specialist medical expertise to enter the affected area and assist, in facilitating the shipment of laboratory samples for analysis, and in maintaining essential trade and commerce to continue to support the economy in the affected area.

Action: The Assembly is invited to:

- a) reaffirm the importance of a coherent/partnership approach by all parties in preparing for and responding to pandemics or public health emergencies;
- b) urge all States to adhere to the guidance of WHO during public health outbreaks, following the International Health Regulations and, in particular, avoiding unilateral decisions to introduce border controls, screening requirements and vaccinations requirements or other measures impeding travel, which are not aligned with WHO guidance;
- c) request that the Council continue to work with the World Economic Forum (WEF) and other international parties on developing the “Epidemic Readiness Accelerator” to facilitate a co-ordinated response to outbreaks of international concern; and
- d) request that the Council further develop the work of the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA).

<i>Strategic Objectives:</i>	This working paper relates to the Safety and Security and Facilitation Strategic Objectives.
<i>Financial implications:</i>	Not applicable
<i>References:</i>	WHO International Health Regulations (2005 and updates)

¹ Arabic, Chinese, English, French, Russian and Spanish versions provided by IATA.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 IATA recognizes the importance of an effective and appropriate response to major public health events, including pandemics, and the important relationship between such events and international travel. It also recognizes the critical role of the WHO and other relevant internationally-focused health bodies (such as the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), the European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC), and the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO)) in responding to pandemics and other major public health events.

1.2 IATA is a non-State actor with the WHO and as such has a workplan agreed with the WHO, the current edition of which is valid until end of 2020.

1.3 IATA considers it crucial that States follow the guidance of the WHO and other relevant health bodies in responding to pandemics and other major public health events. In particular, IATA believes that unilateral decisions by States to introduce border controls, exit/entry screening requirements, and other measures which impede the movement of passengers and goods, have the potential to jeopardize the ability of the country to respond to an outbreak, for example by impeding the arrival of health experts or the transport of biological specimens.

1.4 IATA has been a supporter of the Collaborative Arrangement for the Prevention and Management of Public Health Events in Civil Aviation (CAPSCA) since its inception and applauds ICAO's leadership role in this initiative. This is a multilateral collaboration which is aimed at furthering the above objectives and will require ongoing support to make further progress in achieving these.

2. RESPONDING TO OUTBREAKS

2.1 The WHO publishes and administers the International Health Regulations (IHR).

2.2 Public health events of international concern (PHEIC) are monitored and responded to by WHO in close liaison with other health authorities and other international organisations including WHO.

2.3 Airline travel can have a role in accelerating the spread of disease outbreaks from one region to another. It can also have a vital role in responding to outbreaks by facilitating the supply of medical expertise to the affected regions, by permitting the transport of vaccines, medicines, and laboratory reagents and specimens for analysis, and by ensuring that commerce and trade with the affected regions is maintained, providing them with an economic foundation necessary for managing the outbreak. WHO and other internationally focused public health agencies provide measured advice on the appropriate response to outbreaks.

2.4 Public health events including pandemics have the potential to cause massive disruption to airline travel and trade. Past emergencies such as SARS and Ebola have demonstrated the capacity for major economic impact on the affected countries, which can be out of proportion to the risk posed by the outbreak itself.

2.5 ICAO already works closely with WHO and IATA, along with other international organizations such as the WEF and World Travel and Tourism Council (WTTC), in planning for and responding to major public health events.

2.6 While responses to past outbreaks have featured a range of innovative partnerships among businesses and civil society to complement the official response, efforts in this regard have typically been ad hoc, limited to traditional partners and largely initiated only after the outbreak has substantially evolved. Cooperation has also generally been challenged by uncertainty relating to communication and coordination.

2.7 Recognizing that reliable public-private cooperation is essential to an effective global response to public health emergencies, the WEF is championing the development of an “Epidemics Readiness Accelerator” to create a common platform for collaboration in a number of key areas, including communications, supply chain and logistics, sharing and analysis of data and associated legal and regulatory aspects.

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