

NEWS RELEASE

UNNECESSARY RESTRICTIONS AND LACK OF SUPPORT FOR AIR TRANSPORT INDUSTRY WILL PROLONG SOUTHERN AFRICA'S ECONOMIC RECOVERY

- Air travel can be safe without arbitrary prohibitions on travellers from classified countries
- Jobs and Southern Africa's economic recovery are in jeopardy
- Survival and recovery requires governments and industry to engage directly at highest levels

08 October 2020, Johannesburg – Southern Africa's economic recovery and future growth, along with nearly five million jobs in the region are in jeopardy as a result of the continued imposition of inconsistent and arbitrary restrictions on air travel, warns the Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA).

At the same time, AASA called for the region's governments to prioritise support for their entire air transport and tourism industries, including private and public sector airlines, airports, air navigation services, ground handlers, safety regulators, suppliers and allied businesses.

"Not a single aviation industry stakeholder has been spared. Every organisation relying on revenue for airline operations and passengers is affected, with traumatic social and financial consequences. Governments can and must provide support to the entire industry as the recovery of their economies is heavily dependent upon it," explained AASA CEO, Chris Zweigenthal, who was addressing the body's virtual 50th annual general meeting today.

Support could be provided through cash infusions, government-backed loans and through relief mechanisms such as waivers and reductions on taxes and charges. Governments could also safely prevent prolonging the economic harm and distress by adopting clear and consistent measures for the safe resumption of regional and international travel in all categories.

"We welcomed the re-opening of South Africa's borders last week, but there needs to be clarity on the risk classification of states by which leisure travellers are either approved or denied entry. The South African government should explain why it has superimposed these additional restrictions onto the set of risk-mitigating health and safety protocols it had already developed and approved for the safe re-opening of the borders. It should also explain its criteria for reducing, or better still, scrapping these lists and lifting the ban on tourists from certain countries. If they are maintained, our industry and the entire regional economy will face a much slower and arduous recovery," said Mr Zweigenthal.

"The crisis calls for direct engagement between industry and government Directors-Generals and Ministers, on an open door and open mind basis. This is essential if we are to address strategic, policy and practical issues that will ensure the safe restart of airline operations and the region's economic recovery, without compromising public health and safety," he added.

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Impact on air transport and its economic contribution

ECONOMIC & COMMERCIAL IMPACT	GLOBAL	AFRICA	SOUTH AFRICA
Economic contribution at risk	\$1.8tn (51%)	\$37bn (58%)	\$4.7bn (51%)
Jobs at risk (aviation related)	46m (52%)	5.0m (58%)	270,000 (57%)
Jobs at risk (aviation direct)	4.8m (42%)	172,000 (39%)	40,000 (57%)
Airline profitability	-\$85.3bn vs \$28.3bn	-\$2bn vs \$200m	-\$1bn vs \$200m
Passengers	-66%	-70%	-68%

[References : IATA Economics, ATAG]

“While governments must assist communities and other enterprises that are also desperate for financial relief, they should not ignore the vital role that aviation, travel and tourism will play in driving Southern Africa’s economic recovery through the jobs they create - directly and indirectly - and the millions of people whose livelihoods are dependent upon it,” said Mr Zweigenthal.

About AASA

The Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA), represents most of the airlines in the SA Development Community bloc on matters of common interest relating to government policies, legislation, regulations, planning, operational efficiency, safety, security, taxes, charges and other matters affecting its members’ sustainability and the provision of affordable and accessible air transport throughout the region.

AASA was established in 1970 and currently has 20 airline members and 38 associate members, including infrastructure service providers, aircraft and engine manufacturers and other industry suppliers, ground handling companies and allied industry bodies.

AASA is a regular participant and contributor to the International Civil Aviation Organization (ICAO) and International Air Transport Association (IATA) and supports their initiatives in the region.

Media queries

Linden Birns – Plane Talking
 PR & media relations advisor to AASA
 Mob: +27 82 568 8031
 Tel: +27 21 785 5610
linden@icon.co.za