



MEDIA RELEASE

AIRLINES ASSOCIATION OF SOUTHERN AFRICA URGES UK GOVT TO RECONSIDER DECISION TO “RED LIST” SEVERAL SOUTHERN AFRICAN COUNTRIES

26 November 2021, JOHANNESBURG – The Airlines Association of Southern Africa (AASA) notes with distress the UK government’s announcement that it will place South Africa, Namibia, Botswana, Zimbabwe, Lesotho and Eswatini back onto its “Red List” of countries to which it imposes severe travel restrictions and quarantines.

“While we respect every nation’s sovereign right to implement whatever measures it sees fit to combat the spread of COVID-19 variants, we urge Whitehall to reconsider what appears to have been a hasty decision, given the paucity of detailed knowledge and information on the newly identified variant, its presence and the efficacy of vaccines in limiting its potential to cause serious illness. With its announcement, the UK is delivering a body-blow to our region’s travel and tourism sector. It puts businesses, as well as tens of thousands of jobs and many more livelihoods at risk,” said AASA CEO, Aaron Munetsi.

“The business and leisure air travel industry in Southern Africa has only just begun to see green shoots emerge as governments have increasingly begun to relax and look to align and simplify their travel requirements and procedures. However, the UK’s unilateral step is a major set-back that sets a worrying precedent,” he added.

Prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the commercial airline industry in South Africa supported close to 472,000 jobs across the economy and contributed \$9.4 billion (approximately ZAR152.5bn at today’s exchange rate) to the country’s economy. This equated to 3.2% of GDP. The industry is also of strategic social and economic importance in all of the other countries in the Southern Africa Development Community.

The COVID-19 pandemic has caused disarray to air travel and tourism worldwide. Southern Africa’s connectivity with the rest of the world fell by 80% as a result of travel restrictions. Total domestic, regional and inter-continental demand had recovered to about 40% of pre-COVID traffic levels by the start of November 2021 with domestic and regional traffic leading the comeback. Prior to the UK’s “Red List” announcement today, long-haul traffic to and from Southern Africa was forecast to return to 2019 levels by 2025.

About AASA

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 17 airline members and 35 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.

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